CHRISTIAN FAITH AND THE MODERN STATE

NILS EHRENSTRÖM

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CHRISTIAN FAITH AND THE MODERN STATE

AN ECUMENICAL APPROACH

by

NILS EHRENSTRÖM

Translated by

DENZIL PATRICK AND OLIVE WYON

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PREFACE

THIS VOLUME has been written in connection with the World Conference at Oxford on Church, Community and State. It had its origin in several small continental conferences. Some of the important papers contributed to these conferences have already been published in German in two volumes, *Die Kirche und das Staatsproblem in der Gegenwart* and *Totaler Staat und christliche Freiheit.** Mr. Ehrenström has referred to this material, and in addition to most of the important works published on the continent of Europe in recent years that bear on the subject, as the basis for the survey presented in this volume of some of the main tendencies of thought concerning the new issues that are arising in the relations between church and state. His knowledge of English and American literature is less wide, but just because the volume is written from the continental standpoint and in the light of what is being thought and written in Europe it has an exceptional interest for Anglo-Saxon readers.

It was intended to publish this volume before the Oxford Conference. But various causes delayed publication, and though advance sheets were in the hands of delegates to the conference to help in its deliberations, the volume appears not as part of the preparatory work, but as an aid in the process of thought, study and education which will follow the conference. For this purpose it is admirably suited. It illuminates from many fresh and important

* Edited by the research department of the Universal Christian Council, 41 avenue de Champel, Geneva.

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points of view the question of the relations between the church and the state which is emerging in new forms as one of the acute problems of our time. Mr. Ehrenström is intensely aware of the grave and urgent realities of the present situation and realizes that they demand a fresh effort of thought on the part of the church. It must re-examine the foundations of its faith and consider in the light of conditions today the ways in which Christian conceptions of the relations between church and state have shaped themselves under the pressure of history. As his book shows, Mr. Ehrenström has a profound sense both of the need for a growing mutual understanding between the different branches of the Christian church throughout the world, and of the formidable difficulties in the way of achieving it. He has made an important contribution to the overcoming of these difficulties.

J. H. OLDHAM

July, 1937

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The author desires to express his gratitude to Dr. J. H. Oldham and Dr. H. Schönfeld for their continuous encouragement and help; to Miss Olive Wyon, who has rendered generous assistance in various ways; and to Miss Wyon and Reverend Denzil Patrick for the skill and care with which they have performed their task of translation.

N. E.

I

THE CHALLENGE OF THE MODERN STATE

The great extension of the functions of the state everywhere in recent times, and the emergence in some countries of the authoritarian or totalitarian state, raise in a new and often an acute form the agelong question of the relation between the church and the state. The gravity of the modern problem lies in the fact that the increasing organization of the life of the community, which is made possible by modern science and technique and is required for the control and direction of economic forces, coincides with a growing secularization of the thought and life of mankind. . . . No question, therefore, more urgently demands the grave and earnest consideration of Christian people than the relation between the church, the state and the community, since on these practical issues is focused the great and critical debate between the Christian faith and the secular tendencies of our time.

THESE WORDS are taken from the statement in which the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work gave the reasons for its decision to hold in 1937 in Oxford a World Conference of Churches on the subject, "Church, Community and State."[1] They explain succinctly why the issue of the nation and the state has in recent years claimed the attention of the widest circles, and why it has become, especially for Christians and for the churches, a question

[1] For further information regarding the general situation which has led to this decision, the issues involved, and the concrete plans for the Oxford Conference the reader may be referred once for all to the admirable booklet by Dr. J. H. Oldham, *Church, Community, and State* (S.C.M. Press). Cf. also *Program of Work in Preparation for the World Conference of Churches in 1937, on Church, Community, and State* (published by the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work, 41 avenue de Champel, Geneva).

which demands an authoritative answer and responsible decision.

Without involving oneself in intricate discussions of the question whether there were pre-political stages in the history of human civilization, one may say in general that the state is as old as humanity itself. With unwearying acumen, and certainly not without success, human thought has labored to make clear the manifold transformations of the state in the course of history, its sociological and juridical structure, its philosophical implications. There is, however, one event, indeed *the* decisive event in the history of that phenomenon in human communal life which we call the state, which political science has not grasped and cannot grasp upon its own presuppositions. This decisive event happened " in the fullness of time," when the Word became flesh and the church of Christ was founded.

In the years before Christ a distinguishing characteristic of the state was the close connection between, and indeed frequently the identity of, politics and religion — the community of the state and the community of worship. The fact that the state was consecrated and permeated by religion gave it that metaphysical and even divine dignity and absoluteness of which the Caesar worship of the ancients affords so signal and at the same time so warning an example. Since the days of Christ, and until the end of history, the church stands over against the state as a token that the Father of Jesus Christ is the sole Lord and King of the whole world, and that the state possesses no ultimate and omnipotent authority but derives its dignity from the fact that it is an instrument in the hand of the sovereign God.

Hence a tension has arisen. The history of the past two thousand years bears unbroken testimony to the continual endeavors of the state — sometimes open, sometimes con-

cealed — to gain control of the church and to reconquer its throne of omnipotent and all-embracing sovereignty. The history of the Christian attitude toward the state bears equal testimony to the existence of this tension by its frequent oscillation between the two radical extremes of idolizing the state and of regarding it as satanic.

Thus the state always presents Christians with an urgent problem which they find it impossible to evade. To religion the sphere of politics is never neutral ground. The state is an exposed sector of that mysterious struggle between *civitas Dei* and *civitas diaboli* which is the central issue in world history. That is why it must always remain a Christian obligation to grapple ceaselessly with the problem of the state, whatever particular form and emphasis that problem may assume under different historical skies. That is also the reason why the attitude of any religious interpretation of life toward the state is a sure indication of its depth and realism.

The words quoted at the beginning of this chapter take us to the heart of the present situation. After a period in which the state was subject to widespread depreciation and tended to be emptied both theoretically and practically of any real content, the post-war generation is witnessing a mighty swing of the pendulum in the other direction. The special significance of this development is the fact that it must be interpreted as a revealing illustration of the profound revolution that is taking place in man's understanding of himself and in his attitude toward life as a whole. Once again the claim is being advanced that the state is the ultimate aim and center of gravity of human life. Once again we see unmistakably the tendency of the state, inherent in it by reason of its unique authority, toward absolute sovereignty and all-embracing totality. This tendency is all the more dangerous at the present day because it is

now a post-Christian phenomenon and consequently has a demonic urge entirely different from that of the pre-Christian worship of the state. Politics has become once more, in the most real sense, a matter of faith.

The aggressive totalitarianisms of the present moment, in which the agelong issue of the sanction and purpose of the state is put before men in a form more acute than perhaps ever before, lay on the members of the Church Universal a new responsibility demanding momentous decisions and deeply considered action. In this grave situation they are called, not to the defense of traditional positions, but to a new missionary undertaking, fraught with perils but also with opportunities, in a sphere of human life where few hitherto have listened to the voice of Christ, namely, that of politics. They are called to reinterpret, in that attitude of obedient listening which is at the same time the highest activity, what is God's will for man and for the state, and to rededicate themselves and their whole political life to God in prayer and intercession, in active cooperation and, if need be, in suffering and persecution. They are called to bear witness to the King of kings before the rulers and the ruled of the world, to give guidance, warning and consolation in unswerving loyalty to God and in profound sympathy with the world and its distress. They are called to a trust, springing out of self-despair, that whatever may be the results of this mission they are in the hand of God.

Thus Christians all over the world are becoming increasingly concerned over the fact that the church has today no clear grasp of the political implications of its divine message, no clear vision of its responsibilities and opportunities in face of new national and political movements that are changing profoundly the life of humanity. It is this situation that has led the Universal Christian Council

for Life and Work to devote itself for a number of years to the study of these problems, and to call the churches to reconsider their attitude toward the issues involved.

This ecumenical study of the political implications of Christianity, by the intrinsic logic of the subject matter itself and under the influence of present world conditions, has developed along two converging lines. The general uncertainty and confusion of tongues, the acute consciousness of the utter inadequacy of the catchwords and vague generalizations which govern current Christian practice and theory in relation to politics, have made it imperative to re-examine the traditional teaching on the subject and to reformulate it afresh, from the Christian point of view, on the firm foundations of faith. In a patient attempt to discover the basic themes behind the bewildering diversity of variations it sets out to bring what is fundamental in Christian faith to bear on what is fundamental in politics. But the historic situation in which we are living calls for immediate decisions on pressing questions and demands concrete guidance. The vital process of clarifying the essential issues must, therefore, go hand in hand with a comprehensive analysis of the actual situation, its deeper forces and conflicting aims, its realities and ideologies, and the ensuing responsibilities for the Christian church and for all its members. These studies have centered round the totalitarian tendencies in contemporary history, not only in politics but also in economics, education and cultural life.[2]

2 Some preliminary results of this ecumenical process of thought are published in *Die Kirche und das Staatsproblem in der Gegenwart* and *Totaler Staat und christliche Freiheit,* which contain the papers submitted to, and reports on the discussion at, two international study conferences in Paris, 1934, and in Holland, 1935, held under the auspices of the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work. These two volumes form the nucleus of the reference material used in preparing the present essay.

It would therefore be a correct interpretation of this whole undertaking to say that its inner dynamic is nothing less than the great concrete alternative of the present hour: the uniqueness and universality of the message of the church versus all modern totalitarian claims, both secular and pagan.

As one of many stages in this ecumenical exchange of thought, the present volume aims at giving a brief survey of some predominant issues and tendencies of thought — more particularly on the continent of Europe [3] — in the contemporary Christian struggle to gain a fresh understanding of the state. It is specially concerned with the deeper assumptions which determine, or should determine, the Christian attitude toward the state — the prolegomena and first principles of a political ethic. Hence it does not enter into the vast field of the empirical relations between church and state, nor does it attempt to describe and evaluate the political tendencies and developments in individual countries.[4] But in spite of its restricted range such an "ecumenical synopsis" may have a certain instructive value insofar as the positions and views expounded undoubtedly are illustrative of fundamental issues which are the common concern of all, and may thus serve to stimulate thought among those who belong to traditions other than those which receive chief attention here.

[3] The considerable space given in this essay to Roman Catholic political philosophy is justified by the great influence which this view has exercised in history, and still exercises, not only within but also outside the boundaries of the Roman Church itself. Any discussion that claims to be ecumenical must give it due consideration.

[4] The proper setting for the present more theoretical treatment of the subject is supplied by Professor Adolf Keller's recent book, *Church and State on the European Continent,* which gives an excellent description of the present relations between church and state, and of dominant political ideologies and myths.

II

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF THE STATE AS AN ECUMENICAL ISSUE

Is there a distinctive Christian conception of the state? And if so, what are its characteristic features? The aim of this description of Christian thought on the state as an *ecumenical* issue is to draw attention at the outset to an undeniable fact which influences even the details of every interpretation of political reality which lays claim to be Christian, and confronts it with peculiar difficulties. The fact is that there is no single Christian view of the state; there are many.

The conflicts of view which divide the different denominational traditions from one another and not infrequently cut across these divisions, tending to obscure not only the more peripheral questions of the interpretation of the world and of moral conduct but also the essentials of the faith itself, are today a cause of distress to many Christians. They are felt too as a call to deeper reflection upon that which Christians have in common, upon that which unites them. It is a deepened understanding of the fundamental unity of the universal church, and a new consciousness of responsibility in relation to the social and political distresses of the world, that has led the ecumenical movement to issue its call for united Christian witness and action.

We cannot here consider at length how this inalienable conviction of the profound unity of all who confess Christ as Lord has been pressing for historical realization, especially during the past ten years, and has found its expres-

sion within the ecumenical movement. However, one marked result of recent activity in this direction, which has far-reaching implications, must be kept in mind. The experience of genuine fellowship and the sincere endeavor to find common Christian solutions and guidance in questions of social and political life have had the effect of revealing, to a surprising degree, the extent and depth of the differences in the various ecclesiastical traditions and professions of faith. Ecumenical cooperation has resulted in a clearer understanding of the divergences of view, both between and within the denominations, which constitute distinct hindrances to that Christian fellowship of thought and action for which we hope and pray. But while the answers which are being given to the burning issues of human existence differ widely both in fundamentals and in details, the necessity for a united front in the struggle with the anti-Christian forces of this generation becomes more urgent every year and every month. A resigned acceptance of the diversity of conflicting views, whether individual or denominational, resulting in the weakness of division and disintegration, would therefore be treason against the divine commission of the church.

In face of this problem of inter-confessional and intra-confessional disagreement versus ecumenical cooperation and common witness two attitudes are possible, and both are found within church circles. In the one view the existing differences are variations of the same fundamental Christian teaching, variations which can be explained by the historical, psychological and religious development of the various traditions and are consequently merely relative and accidental differences of emphasis. The multitude of voices is regarded as a richly orchestrated harmony; that is to say, the divisive denominational element is conceived as wholly subordinate to the ecumenical or is regarded as the

surviving remnant of an obsolete theological controversy. Another form of the same fundamental attitude, while it admits the far-reaching and unavoidable differences in the realm of doctrine, draws a distinction between religion and morals and regards the differences in question as of little account for the practical realization of Christian motives in the realm of social and political ethics. It holds that a certain unity already exists in this field, or with good will can be achieved, and that this agreement in practice may be counted on to pave the way for the desired unity in the more fundamental questions of dogma. The goal, on this view, is a supra-confessional body of social teaching round which Christians of all churches can unite, one which will furnish inspiration and guiding principles for a common attack by the whole of Christendom on the world-wide wrong, injustice and oppression of the present day and of the immediate future. In many cases the common basis is found — whether as a fully worked-out theological doctrine or as an unconscious and unexpressed presupposition — in a conception of natural law as universally evident and universally binding.

The second view, on the other hand, regards the differences in question as involving the ultimate questions and convictions of faith. Indeed the question is raised whether the existence of such radically opposed convictions within historical Christianity does not compel us, in terms of the metaphor already used, to regard the multiplicity of Christian voices not as the harmony of a sublime symphony, but as the irreconcilable disharmony of many symphonies played at the same time. Further, the separation of faith and ethos, which is presupposed in the quest for a supra-confessional social ethic, is rejected as theologically impossible, since every Christian judgment upon any question of social life insofar as it claims to be genuinely Christian

must be derived from the very center of the faith. Any Christian conception of the state and its concrete problems, for example, is definitely related to a particular interpretation of the essence of Christianity. To speak as a Christian about the state is to make assertions about God and man, creation and sin, the significance of Christ or the kingdom of God, even when these remain unexpressed or are taken for granted. Since there is no consensus of Christian belief on these matters of faith, but rather division and conflict, it follows that there will be a corresponding divergence of view on matters of social and political ethics; and this dissension, as church history shows, does in fact dominate the situation.[1]

It is sometimes urged as a way of escape from this distressing dilemma that the difficulties resulting from the differences between and within the denominations would be overcome by a common return to the Bible. But not even this measure would in the end lead to the desired goal. Every church and every individual Christian inevitably brings to the interpretation of the biblical word of revelation a definite, preconceived understanding of Christianity conditioned by a particular historical and religious situation, and this is a determining factor in the interpretation of the biblical word. It is an all too familiar fact that the most diverse views have sought to legitimize their claim to be Christian by appealing to Holy Scripture. We are thus compelled to face the hard and distressing fact that not even Holy Scripture provides a common basis for determining the Christian attitude toward the crucial issues of human existence.[2] This fact, however,

1 For confirmation one need only run through the pages, for example, of Troeltsch's *Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (Eng. trans., Allen and Unwin, 1931).

2 Cf. the totally different authority which the Bible has in the Roman Church, and in contemporary Protestantism inspired by the Reformation.

makes it not less but more necessary — in the attempt to reach ecumenical understanding and fellowship — to ask and answer the crucial question of the significance of the Old and New Testaments as the critical norm of all ecclesiastical traditions, including their doctrine of the state.

In the course of the last few years it is the second of the fundamental attitudes which have been mentioned that has gradually come to dominate the ecumenical field and has decisively influenced the conception of its task and method. Undoubtedly, too, this point of view corresponds more closely with the general tendency in Christian thought today. Its emphasis on the necessity of recognizing the differences based upon central convictions does not spring from an academic interest in theological subtleties or from the lack of a sense of responsibility in relation to the tremendous needs of the present. The attitude in question is based rather upon a sober realism which is convinced that the living ecumenical forces of the church will be able to exercise a wide and profound healing influence on the needs and confusions of the modern world only insofar as, on the one hand, they have a firm and living conviction of the church's unity, and, on the other hand, do not cloak the empirical reality of the church by creating illusions about its actual disunity, but accept the real situation as a serious task and problem. To ignore the divergent convictions which separate the churches in ultimate matters, or to conceal them by ingenious verbal compromises, would be a betrayal of the truth which is being sought in ecumenical fellowship.

The aim of the ecumenical inter-confessional debate which is needed and is indeed already in its initial stages, is not to reconcile and synthesize the private opinions of individual Christians in different countries, however important and worthy of consideration these may be. Its aim

is rather to foster an interchange of thought on religious and moral questions between the different Christian communions, mediated by representative and responsible members of these communions, with reference to the distinctive mission of the one universal church in the world today. This process of mutual question and answer is far removed from all confessional wrangling and self-sufficiency. It is an attempt to take our neighbor seriously in his individuality and to understand him as he desires to be understood in his central convictions.

Such an approach as has here been suggested might appear to lead us far from "practical Christianity" and to have little to do with the particular subject which concerns us here, the Christian view of the state. Nevertheless, the experience of the past few years affords evidence that this working hypothesis — some might prefer to call it so — provides the most promising approach and, at the same time, is likely to prove in the long run the most effective in leading to practical action, since it takes account both of the empirical reality of the many churches and of the *una sancta* of faith. So long as we continue to have such a confusing variety of opinions about the special task of the church in social life it is singularly ineffective to call the church as a whole to united and energetic action now in this direction and now in that. We need first of all to gain a wider and deeper understanding as to what "actions" are really proper and fitting for the church, what possibilities of cooperation in the social and political sphere are permitted, and what limits are set by the inmost self-consciousness of the various individual churches.

It may perhaps be assumed that there is one presupposition common to all churches and therefore "ecumenical," the presupposition namely that it is not the business of the church to pursue all kinds of worldly aims foreign to its

own nature, but that its best contribution to the elucidation and solution of the world's problems is to set them in the light of its unique message. The church exerts its strongest influence upon the life of the human community in all its various spheres when it clearly and forcefully proclaims the uniqueness and the divine authority of the message entrusted to it. But just because this divine message is so variously interpreted the quest for common Christian witness and action cannot evade the stumbling block of confessional differences but must find some way of overcoming it. There is therefore no easy fulfillment of the task which confronts the ecumenical movement in the present gigantic struggle between Christianity and secularism — the task of providing Christian direction and inspiration in spite of all differences of view. Without attempting to escape from the vital tension between the ecumenical and confessional elements — a tension inseparable from the existence of the empirical church — the ecumenical debate between the confessions is forced to penetrate more and more deeply into the ultimate significance of the divine message for this world; and in that very fact lies a great hope for a more united and dynamic Christian witness through the church — *when* and *where* it pleases God!

After these general observations, which are essential for the understanding of the issues to be examined in the following chapters, we return to our subject — the Christian view of the state. If the thesis put forward is correct — that there is an intimate relation between man's ultimate convictions on the one hand and his moral and political attitudes on the other — it follows that where there are different types of religious faith we must reckon also with different, and indeed opposing, conceptions of the state.

At this point it may be useful to give a brief outline of the field we are about to consider.

The Roman Catholic Church presents in a unique form the combination of a tradition of faith which is complete in itself and has been thoroughly thought out in the light of its initial assumptions, and a detailed political and legal philosophy which has been authoritatively interpreted in several papal encyclicals of the last few decades — although in making this statement we should not lose sight of the well known description of Catholicism as a *complexio oppositorum*. To use the words of a Roman Catholic writer:

> Actually, apart from the Roman Catholic Church no Christian communion exists which could lay down the law, in the form of fixed dogmas, on questions of faith and morals, and thus also on questions affecting the moral foundations of the life of the state, if for no other reason than that none of these communions pretends to lay claim to such a degree of doctrinal infallibility as not to have to admit divergences of opinion.[3]

It is characteristic of the Anglican and the Orthodox communions that within them there exist side by side various religious types which cannot be reduced to a single basic conception. Both in Anglicanism and in Orthodoxy the need for a doctrinal explication of the content of faith does not exist in the same way as it does, for example, and preeminently, in Roman Catholicism. The elasticity and the comprehensiveness, which in no way exclude, but on the contrary include, the consciousness of being securely and instinctively rooted in the Christian tradition as a whole, are felt to be an advantage and a strength. Thus the differences in the attitude toward the state of the members of these churches are usually regarded as an expression of the wealth of their vital heritage. The question, however, may be raised whether in these churches too there do not exist behind the diversities of thought certain constant characteristics, the disclosure and comprehension of which

[3] Rüther, *Der katholische Staatsgedanke,* p. 9.

might be definitely promoted by means of ecumenical debate with other types of Christian faith.

The churches which came into being as the result of the Reformation have undergone such a varied process of transformation in the course of their history that, in view of their present condition, it is rather pointless to ask whether there is a distinctive Protestant view of Christianity as well as of the state. On the European continent Protestantism is now being profoundly influenced by a revival of the spirit of the Reformation. The writings of the Reformers and the Protestant Confessions are the common source of an active debate on the essentials of Christianity and of a Christian political ethic. It must, however, be recognized that within Protestantism as a whole the necessity for a connection with the heritage of the Reformation, and the nature of this connection, are highly controversial issues. Therefore, as has already been indicated, the question remains open whether there are any common fixed points which can guide us in looking for a Protestant answer to political questions.

As has become evident, and as will appear in more detail in the following chapters, our subject matter brings us face to face with an almost unlimited and extremely confusing variety of views and opinions. It is the recognition of this diversity that brings home to us the tremendous significance and immense potential fruitfulness of an ecumenical exchange of thought on Christian faith and the modern state. An effort of this kind must not ignore the differences which actually exist. But it must endeavor to make more flexible the traditional ways of stating the issues and of looking at things. It must try to see the genuine contrasts and similarities as they actually are, and to discover the deeper religious motives which underlie attitudes that may have caused misunderstanding and concern among Chris-

tians of other traditions. In the process of comparing and contrasting various controversial opinions it will attempt to reduce them to those fundamental types of belief which ultimately determine the Christian position in political matters. This discussion, therefore, will not be merely theoretical and academic, without relation to the task of the church in the catastrophic situation of the modern world. It will help the individual churches to understand one another better and to learn from one another's thought, experience and failure. It will also fulfill an indispensable work of preparation in the great enterprise of world-wide ecumenical cooperation, since it endeavors to discover and formulate those crucial issues in the field of national and international politics to which the Christian church everywhere has to find a fresh answer, and suggests spheres and methods of common action in spite of all fundamental divergences of belief. Thus, humanly speaking, it may help to create new possibilities of a vigorous and concerted Christian witness in face of political and international developments which challenge everything for which Christianity stands.

This ecumenical exchange of experience and thought cannot, however, take the existing divergences of fundamental belief for granted. When differing views confront one another fundamental questions of truth are involved and the need of a common reformation becomes plain. The ecumenical movement cannot rest content with the mere juxtaposition of traditional views; it raises the vital question of the *authentic* Christian message concerning the political order. The conflicting positions in regard to a political ethic which divide Christians are a searching challenge to the self-sufficiency of the divided churches and traditions, and a humiliating reminder of their lack of

unity. Thus the ecumenical issue of a Christian political ethic which furnishes a practical example of Christian disunity, becomes a powerful incentive to a fuller realization within the many churches of that *una sancta* which already exists in the one Christ.

III

DIFFERENT METHODS OF APPROACH

BEFORE we discuss our subject in detail, we must at least briefly indicate some important and complicated prolegomena of Christian political thought: its general frame of reference, its sources of knowledge, its method, and its relation to political philosophies and realities. It is no exaggeration to assert that the predominating uncertainty and lack of clarity in these questions of approach and method are largely responsible for the prevailing confusion with regard to our subject. In what does the distinctive character of the Christian view of political life consist? How are its standards and criteria gained? Can a definite body of politico-moral principles, which should be advocated by Christians, be derived from the Bible? Or is there perhaps no specifically Christian conception of politics at all, and are there only individual Christian interpretations of the concrete political situation, in which the material factors of the situation itself supply the guiding principles of judgment? The issues are complex and the methods of approach are extraordinarily various even among those who have devoted much labor and thought to this question of Christianity and the state.

It is sufficient for our purpose to present some such types of approach in schematic form. According to one conception, human reason gains the knowledge of the structure of a true political order from the nature of things and of man. This knowledge is not denied by the Christian faith, but is affirmed as the true and valid apprehension of an

order which is at once the natural and the Christian one and which is overarched and sanctified by the kingdom of grace. It is possible to construct a normative ideal of the state, to which all political theories and realities have to approximate. From this point of view, therefore, it becomes possible to deliver a Christian judgment not only upon the motives of human action within any given political institution, but also upon the institution itself; and this judgment is not merely in the form of a negative repudiation, but it also gives constructive direction. And since this picture of the true state is inherent in the nature of man as such, and is merely brought into prominence by revelation, it can claim not only to be binding for the political conduct of Christians but also to be universally relevant and practicable.

From a second point of view, there is no specifically Christian conception of the divine purpose of the state outside the actual course of political history. The Christian interpretation of political phenomena is like every other interpretation in that it finds its norms through a scientific study of political history and a careful analysis of any given situation, and recognizes in the results of this conscientious evaluation of the political data an indication of the will of God in political life. There can, in consequence, be no competition between Christian views and those of serious political science. The ultimate truths of the political reality itself correspond with the eternal principles of all human conduct — such as the sacredness of personality, the fact of fellowship, the duty of service and the promotion of justice — which have found their crowning incarnation in Jesus Christ. Thus these principles afford no substantially new element of knowledge for the thought of Christians about the state. They are, however, an invaluable corrective and supplementary element in

the concrete decision in the ever changing political situation, and give to this decision its Christian and truly human character.

A third view sees the fundamental and valid revelation concerning the meaning of the state in the biblical message as a whole, and finds valuable guidance in its various utterances regarding political matters. The theological exposition of the Christian faith includes, as an integral element, a " theology of the state " which provides the doctrinal frame of reference for every Christian political ethic. The Christian doctrine of the state is thus conceived not as a detailed, rival political science, but as a distinctive contribution to the general understanding of things political which indicates especially the ultimate sanction and the divine purpose of all state authority. The continual interplay between these basic affirmations and political facts and theories can produce a concrete political ethic which, in the spirit of evangelical freedom, not in that of legalistic casuistry, tries to formulate the necessary criteria and standards which will provide guidance for Christian conduct in the flux of political life.

A fourth view, starting from quite different premises, would come to almost the same conclusions as the second, namely, that there is no particularly Christian conception of political life apart from the affirmation that the transcendent message of the Gospel relegates all temporal affairs to the relative plane. All political thought and action, including that of the Christian, takes place in the secular sphere and is a matter of political wisdom and political expediency. The question of the foundation and method of Christian political ethics accordingly becomes pointless.

It is obvious that all these and similar considerations about the right approach are in every case determined by a certain view of the relation between revelation and

reality. The problem of approach and procedure thus leads us directly to the question of the significance of Christian faith and its implications for politics.

"Every great political issue always involves a theological issue." This utterance of Donoso Cortés describes a conviction, always present as a dynamic in the history of Christianity, which has taken on a new vitality and urgency in our own day. All political practice and philosophy presuppose a definite faith and definite assertions concerning God, man, the world — however inarticulate and unconscious these may be. In the vast and chaotic struggles of the present between political movements and ideals which fill men with glowing enthusiasm and the bitterest hate, ultimately it is problems of faith which are at stake. But the decisive question for humanity is: *What* faith? The church answers by professing its faith in the God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ, and maintains that this good news of God's redeeming love has unique significance for all men and for every sphere of human life. It proclaims this faith in its fullness as the only relevant answer to the complex of problems raised by politics.

An effective Christian witness, however, is greatly hindered by the prevailing uncertainty and confusion about the actual implications of this message. This situation is all the more humiliating and depressing since humanity is now seeking desperately for new answers to the question of end and means in political life, and in so doing is urged forward by an instinctive feeling that any valid solution must arise out of religious depths, out of some kind of faith. The widespread belief that it is possible to proclaim the Christian attitude toward the tremendous political questions of the present day without first making clear what is the distinctive significance of the small but all-important

word "Christian," has proved a tragic delusion. It is therefore scarcely surprising that a growing number of people within the churches are deeply convinced that the whole traditional Christian doctrine concerning politics requires a fundamental re-examination and a courageous reformulation. It needs to be set free from unchristian assumptions and motives and from illegitimate identifications with all kinds of tenets which have their spiritual home in secularism and paganism both old and new. It must be anchored more consciously in the essentials of living faith and true doctrine.

At the present time Christian thought stands on the threshold of such an inquiry into the fundamental principles which should control its political attitude. The questions with which it is concerned lie at the very heart of the Christian faith: the uniqueness and universality of the revelation of God in Christ as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier; the status and destiny of man; the victorious sovereignty of God in the mysterious course of history; the significance of inter-human relationships; and the function of the church in social and political life.[1] The bearing of such issues on political ethics being our particular concern, we turn in the following chapters to the great traditions in contemporary Christianity and see, in a few illustrative instances, what they teach on the sanction, nature and purpose of the state.

1 For the treatment of these more theological problems in connection with the Oxford Conference under the four headings: The Christian Doctrine of the Church, of Man, of History, and of the Common Life, cf. *Church, Community and State,* by J. H. Oldham, and *Program of Work in Preparation for the World Conference of Churches in 1937 on Church, Community and State.*

IV

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DOCTRINE OF THE STATE

ROMAN Catholic political philosophy is based upon the Catholic view of the world as an organic hierarchy of beings and ends, a view which has found classic expression in the Thomist synthesis of medieval ecclesiastical tradition and Aristotelian-Stoic philosophy. In all the various stages of this hierarchy of being the world is controlled and inspired by the divine reason and bound into a harmoniously consistent whole. In this comprehensive order of being every part is related to every other in the mutual relation of means and ends; at the same time all are related to the true Being and the highest End: God. The boundary between the two great realms, the natural and the supernatural, runs through this hierarchy of being. The apprehension of the right distinction between these two orders, and the way in which they are related to each other, is the cardinal point in Catholic faith and is essential to its philosophy of the state. Different schools of thought vary in their understanding of the mutual relation between the orders of nature and supernature, and in their estimate of the effect of sin in the realm of nature; but all schools of thought presuppose the close relation between these orders and the subordination of the natural to the supernatural. Nothing is further from Catholic thought than a radical separation between these two spheres of being. Rather, its concern is to relate the two as closely as possible without removing the boundaries between them.

Man, as a psycho-physical being, in his individual and in his corporate existence is related both to the natural and to the supernatural order. It is true, of course, that, owing to the fall, man has forfeited his supernatural inheritance; yet he still retains, though in an imperfect and distorted form, his faculty of free will and his connection with divine reason. The eternal law of God, which springs from the divine reason, is the creative principle of the universe, the ultimate source of all norms. This law manifests itself to the human reason in the natural moral law, which, within the complicated variety of all historical life, exhibits the essence, meaning and purpose of nature as a whole, both human and subhuman.

Here there is no room for anything arbitrary or subjective, or for any idea of radical sinfulness and incapacity for the good. Just as every man participates in the divine reason, so natural law also is evident to and binding upon every rational man *qua* man, at all times and in all places. The law of nature provides man with a reliable and universally valid criterion for all ethical truth and conduct. What, however, is the content of natural law? Its cardinal proposition is *suum cuique,* that is, to every man his due. Thus through a closer process of definition it is possible to deduce a rich and well articulated system of concrete norms which can be applied to all the various situations of human life. It is of course true that, owing to the fact that man's reason has become clouded and his will power weakened, only the most general moral principles are directly evident and universally valid; and the more concrete the principles become the greater grows the possibility of erroneous knowledge and false action. But taking its moral prescriptions as a whole, natural law offers man a wonderfully stable principle of action and a criterion for distinguishing between good and evil.

The vault of this great kingdom of nature — as a preparatory and preliminary stage — is overarched by the kingdom of supernature, whose earthly and visible form is expressed in the church, the sacramental institution of grace. Despite its autonomy, the natural order receives its final *raison d'être* and orientation only from the realm of supernature. The knowledge of God given in natural law is supplemented by the knowledge, mediated through the church, of the new law; the natural ethos is perfected by supernatural grace — *gratia non detruit naturam sed supponit et perficit.* Within the church alone does the natural order of existence, and the position of man within it, find its clear and final interpretation; here alone does everything find its allotted place within the cosmic hierarchy. When the church, in a harmonious combination of moral effort and supernatural grace, leads man to his true end — the vision of God — she confirms the peculiar dignity of nature, but at the same time she reveals its relative character, the fact that it is disposed for a world which transcends it. This means that it is an integral part of the great task of the church not only to proclaim supernatural truth and to mediate eternal salvation, but also to be the guardian and the infallible expositor of the divine truth concerning the ends of the life of nature as a whole.

Against this background of metaphysics and theology — which of course could here be indicated only very briefly — the questions must now be put: What, in the Roman Catholic view, is the place of the state in God's saving purpose for mankind? What are its essential elements? How is it related to social life as a whole?

The fact that the law of nature constitutes the point of departure for the Roman Catholic doctrine of the state, and indeed indicates the social nature of man as the ontological ground of the state, is in full accord with the above

exposition of Catholic thought.[1] Catholicism as a whole has adopted, as an adequate expression of its own conception of natural man, the Aristotelian proposition that man is both a rational and a social animal, a *zôon politikon*. All social life has grown organically out of the impulses and powers implanted by the Creator in the nature of man, with the free cooperation of his rational will. Since man is imperfect and needs to be supplemented in various directions he naturally requires all kinds of social contacts in order to develop and perfect his capacities aright. The family, the clan, the nation, the economic order, culture and so on, represent forms of corporate life which support and promote man's endeavor to realize his varied purposes, above all that of his supernatural destiny. Community therefore is not something which is added by chance to the private existence of the individual; it does not consist of a number of essentially isolated monads; it is something natural, already implanted in germ in the very nature of man. Human community, in all its various forms, is as natural as man himself. The community therefore includes a whole series of associations, existing by natural right, which freely supplement and complete one another. But the principle which impels men into these forms of community also impels them toward the creation of an ultimate order which possesses supreme authority and thus watches over and guarantees the interdependence and relative independence of all the other forms of social life. The

[1] The most authoritative documents for the official interpretation which the Roman Church gives to its own philosophy of the state are the encyclicals of Leo XIII: *Diuturnum illud* (1881), on civil power; *Immortale Dei* (1885), on the Christian constitution of states; and *Sapientiae Christianae* (1890), on the chief duties of Christians as citizens. Among other encyclicals which are important in relation to the problems of the state are *Libertas praestantissimum* (1888), on human liberty; and *Rerum novarum* (1891) and *Quadragesimo anno* (1931), on the Christian social order.

guardian which subordinates them all to the common weal is the " perfect natural society " of the state. The state is the natural institution which secures the just balance between all social impulses and purposes, and sees that each has its due.

This conception of the natural origin of the state must not, however, be understood to imply that the divine right and authority of the state is denied. As we have already seen in our discussion of the Catholic doctrine of natural law, it implies the exact opposite. As a coordinating institution, which guarantees and promotes the relative independence and the free development of the different forms of corporate life in accordance with the law of their own nature, the state issues from, and indeed forms part of, the moral world order and constitutes a very valuable instrument in the hand of the Creator for the creation and maintenance of order. Leo XIII has clearly formulated this view in the following words:

> Man's natural instinct moves him to live in civil society, for he cannot, if dwelling apart, provide himself with the necessary requirements of life, nor procure the means of developing his mental and moral faculties. Hence it is divinely ordained that he should lead his life — be it family, social or civil — with his fellow men, among whom alone his several wants can be adequately supplied. But as no society can hold together unless someone be over all, directing all to strive earnestly for the common good, every civilized community must have a ruling authority, and this authority, no less than society itself, has its source in nature, and has, consequently, God for its author. Hence it follows that all public power must proceed from God.[2]

In its clear and decided emphasis upon the view that the state is a divine institution the whole Catholic tradition, with few exceptions, is in harmony with the words of St. Paul in Romans 13 (the Magna Charta of every Christian

[2] Encyclical *Immortale Dei.*

view of the state) that " the powers that be are ordained of God."

The implication follows that it is impossible to hold that the nature of the state and its sanctions are derived from evil. This point of view is well expressed in the statement made by certain Roman Catholic philosophers that even if man had not fallen into sin a state would have been required to direct the common life of human beings. The state, like the other ordinances of community, belongs by nature to the creation. In this actual historical sphere in which the original harmony has been transformed into strife and in which there is constant friction between subjective interests and objective purposes, the state is obliged, if necessary, to impose its authority by force in order to establish and maintain justice and peace. But since man is by nature a political animal the sanction for political order does not depend upon the fact that society has been perverted and corrupted by sin; this fact only introduces a new element: the authority to use force. Those who hold this view, therefore, are emphatically opposed to any view of the state which regards force as one of its constitutive elements; they consider such a view a misinterpretation of reality and a dangerous degradation of the divine authority of the state.[3]

The state is ordained by God. The civil authority also, which in its own sovereign right directs the affairs of the politically organized community, possesses a " divine right." In the political sphere ruler and subject, command and obedience, the imposition and the acceptance of authority, necessarily confront one another. Civil authority is not a foreign and brutal power imposed upon the citizens from without; it is a moral power which is binding on

[3] It may, however, be pointed out that within the medieval tradition the view was sometimes held that the state was derived from the reign of sin.

the conscience because it is based upon natural law and is ultimately a reflection of the majesty of God. This positive obligation to obedience on the part of every citizen, and especially of every Christian, is not altered in principle by the possibility that those who wield political authority may be non-Christians. Even St. Paul's exhortation, " Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers," referred not to a Christian power but to a heathen one. According to the general Catholic view, it is always a moral duty to render obedience to every legitimate political authority in its appropriate sphere of competency and to give loyal and willing cooperation to those who guide the ship of state. The two words " legitimate " and " appropriate " indicate, however, significant qualifications and open up issues which we shall have to discuss in a later chapter.

Some of the chief elements in the Catholic philosophy of the state are now clear to us: The state is based upon the social nature of man, that is, ultimately it is based upon the divine creative will itself; it is the final organ of co-ordination in social life; it imposes order — if need be by the use of force — in virtue of its unique divine authority; and it demands the obedience of the citizens in this its legitimate office. We must now go a step further and bring out in greater detail some of the vital elements in the Catholic doctrine of the state. In order to do so we must try to answer the following question: What is the distinctive characteristic of the work of the state as a social institution, and what is its real purpose? This leads us to a rather more detailed discussion of the definition (already mentioned) of the state as an order of justice. If the state were regarded as the supreme order which coordinates the social functions and aims of man, it would doubtless be possible to conceive this definition so broadly that it could include any and every way of creating and preserving order in human

life. It would be possible to maintain that the state would still be the state even if it were merely the bare, formal capacity for creating order and the expression of a selfish despotic will to power. Catholic philosophy, on its premises of natural law, would unhesitatingly oppose such an empty definition of the meaning of the state. Since the state is part of the moral world order, the content of the coordinating work which it accomplishes is determined, and at the same time limited, by natural law. The body of concrete moral and legal principles deduced from the norm of the *suum cuique* constitutes the objective criterion and the inner content of political rule. To divorce it from natural law by limiting its action to the promotion of social stability is regarded as a secularization of the state which detaches it from God and tends toward Machiavellianism.[4] The fact that the state is defined as an institution of justice does not mean, however, that it is exactly the same as a "law-state" in the traditional sense. It is no mere policeman watching over the rights of the individual and of the group to liberty. Neither must its law be simply the expression of the varying utilitarian party interests of a social majority. Nor does the state create law.[5] Rather, the state is an instrument of the divine world order which, as such, has to organize the various functions of social life according to the prescriptions of natural law. This justice, which constitutes the essence of the state, is therefore no formal, equalitarian, unidimensional faculty for creating order and

[4] The Lutheran conception of the state is often included in this condemnation because of its supposed dissolution of objective moral order in a subjectivist ethos of individual autonomy.

[5] This fundamental tenet of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the state — that the state is not the source of law but that law is pre-ordinate to the state — acquires, as is well known, special significance in regard to the relation between church and state: the church has a law which possesses distinctive and supernatural dignity.

avoiding friction; but it is an articulated objective order which is operative in all the dimensions of social life and is the reflection of the metaphysical order of all things. From this view of the political order and of justice as correlative concepts it follows, as an obvious corollary, that every attempt to conceive irrational, nonethical power as forming an equally essential element of the state is repudiated. At this point the inward connection between a particular interpretation of the state and particular ultimate theological presuppositions becomes very evident. For the fact that the Roman Catholic doctrine of the state conceives the state in the positive way just described as an institution of justice, and also tends to rationalize and to moralize the state both in theory and practice, can only be explained from the point of view of the law of nature. The conception of the state is both based upon and bounded by natural law. The traditional Roman Catholic theory of the state stands and falls with the Thomist doctrine of the law of nature.

Finally, we must discuss the further question of the Roman Catholic definition of the purpose of the state, in order that we may see still more clearly the precise character of the Catholic view of the nature of the state and its right to exist. In accordance with the teleological point of view which is essential to Thomist thought, we may expect that this question concerning the purpose of the state will lead us to the heart of the Catholic doctrine of the state. And, in fact, this is the case. The Roman Catholic definition of the aim of the state has already been mentioned: the common good. The encyclicals of Leo XIII and the explicit statements of Catholic political philosophers have emphasized again and again the dominant significance of this definition of its aim for the interpretation and adoption of an attitude toward political life as a whole. The common good is the directive goal, the creative principle,

the sustaining force of the political community. As it is the guiding principle of the political community it is also the end and the norm of the civil power, which derives its moral sanction and its authority from this very necessity of protecting and of promoting the common good. For only thus is it elevated above the mere possession of power as such to the rank of a moral authority binding on the conscience of the citizen. The common good, as the highest criterion of political life, integrates the various activities and interests of citizens and social associations, and has a sovereign and inalienable right to assert itself which should never be sacrificed to particular interests and party aims. For the common good is not only quantitatively or numerically superior to any kind of private good; qualitatively also it takes the first place in the hierarchy of values and ends. Summed up in a compact formula: In the divine intention the common good is the first and the last law in the political community.[6]

What, however, is the content of the term " the common good " ? It is only when this term is defined in a very concrete way that we become fully aware of the special characteristics of the Roman Catholic conception of the purpose of the state. First, what does the term " common " mean? In putting this question we touch upon an issue which is fundamental in all Christian interpretation of life, the issue, namely, of the relation between the individual and society. It is characteristic of Catholic thought that it regards this relation as a problem of adjustment or balance: on the one hand, Catholic thinkers reject theories which conceive man as an absolute individual; on the other, they reject all interpretations of man as a social being who is merely absorbed in the whole. Thus Catholic thought

[6] Cf. Leo XIII in the encyclicals *Au milieu* and *Notre consolation* (1892).

seeks to pursue a golden *via media.*[7] Catholic political philosophy is vigorously opposed to any theory which would dissolve the common good into an aggregate composed of the welfare of a number of private individuals conceived as isolated atoms. The common good is qualitatively more than the sum of the welfare of all the individual citizens, and it takes a higher place than they in the hierarchy of values — in accordance with the proposition of Aquinas, that "the good of the whole is more than the good of the part." The common good, therefore, as the end of the state, determines the function of the state as the guardian of the stability and progress of the community as a whole — a function which may, in case of need, involve setting aside the interests of individual citizens and social groups. But, on the other hand, the common good does not exist apart from, or indeed in essential contrast to, the good of the individual. The state ought not, it is true, to concern itself directly with the good of the individual, nor is it able to do so; but owing to the fact that the end of the state integrates the welfare of each individual, indirectly the citizens receive a share in the good of the whole. The activity of the state in ordering everything with a view to the common good creates the general conditions and presuppositions for a due development of the individual good. To quote the French Neo-Thomist Maritain:

> This common good . . . is a different thing from the mere aggregation of particular goods, and is not the peculiar good of a whole which . . . relates only to itself and sacrifices the parts to itself; it is the common good of the whole and its parts, a good which integrates particular goods in the whole so far as they are communicable . . . and as it is itself communicable to the parts — whether the material prosperity of the state be in

[7] We must not overlook the fact, however, that the so-called "organological" and "solidarist" schools of thought present points of view which, in the last analysis, are fairly close to these extremes.

question or its intellectual and moral patrimony. And this whole not being a substantial whole like a living organism, but a community of persons and families, ought to have regard for the more fundamental rights which natural law confers on human personality and domestic society. Otherwise it corrupts its own good.[8]

In the closing words of this passage Maritain indicates a further characteristic of the Catholic conception of the common good. The common good is related directly and indirectly, not only to the good of the individual citizens, but also to the good of the supra-individual units within the community, such as the family, the clan, and associations and institutions of the most varied kinds. According to the differing significance of these bodies for the common good the state is related in an unequal way to the citizens as members of these bodies. The relation between state and citizens is accordingly exceedingly varied, and the acts of the state which proceed from its aim preserve and promote the good of the individual citizens in a very varied manner, according to their group-membership. The common good as the aim of the state both transcends and includes the good of the individual citizens and of the social groups.

The private good of the citizen is incorporated in and subordinated to the common good. To infer from this that the Catholic philosophy of the state absorbs the individual man into the political community would be a wholly wrong conclusion. Man is more than a citizen! To quote Maritain again:

Although formally considered as part of the state every act of his can be referred to the common good of the state, man, considered in the absolutely peculiar and incommunicable quality of his liberty and as ordered directly to God as to his

[8] *The Things That Are Not Caesar's*, p. 139.

eternal end, himself enjoying therefore the dignity of a whole (to a more eminent degree than the entire physical universe, because God is much more intimately the end of a soul than of the whole universe of bodies), under this formal aspect escapes inclusion in the political ordination: *Homo non ordinatur ad communitatem politicam secundum se totum et secundum omnia sua* [man is not related to the political community according to his entire being and according to all that he has].[9]

This fundamental conception is also clearly expressed in the definition of the kind of good at which the state aims. Of course the state must concern itself with securing and promoting the material good of the community, with seeing that the natural rights of individuals and groups are duly maintained. This statement however describes only one, and by no means the most important, aspect of the common good which justifies the existence of the state and gives it its aim. In the Catholic doctrine of the state the main accent falls necessarily upon the cultural and especially the moral and religious aspects of the common good; and the special character of this conception of the state comes out most clearly in the way in which it relates the state to the concerns of morality and religion, and thus to the reality of the church. Leo XIII has formulated this conception in a pregnant phrase which has already been quoted: the aim of the state is nothing less than to "procure perfect sufficiency of life." The state is the perfect natural society which makes possible for the community a life truly moral and in every respect worthy of man. Here, indeed, its task does not consist, as has already been emphasized, in prescribing the aims of the cultural life of its citizens or in molding that life by methods of education; rather its task consists in protecting the highest interests of its subjects. The state has no right to intrude upon the

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 125.

moral and spiritual life of the individual, but its duty is to create the natural conditions which enable men to strive unhindered and freely toward their temporal and their supernatural goals. " Nature, in fact, has given us not only physical existence, but moral life likewise. Hence, man expects that the tranquillity of public order, whose immediate purpose is civil society, may be able to secure all his needful well-being, and still more supply the sheltering care which perfects his moral life, which consists mainly in the knowledge and practice of virtue." [10]

The fact that the common good of the community is regarded as related to man's ultimate and supernatural end, which extends far beyond the political sphere, leads quite logically to the view that ultimately the aim of the state can be apprehended and correctly defined only from the point of view of the supernatural good. It is the state's own interest and at the same time its absolute duty to afford protection and encouragement to religion and to observe and obey religion's precepts. The true dignity of the aim of politics resides in the very fact that it is subordinated to the supra-political and supernatural aim. The salvation of souls, the supernatural good, is not given to the state, but is entrusted to the church alone as the guardian of supernatural truth and the dispenser of divine grace. The church alone has " been invested with such power of governing souls as to exclude altogether the civil authority." [11] The common good, which is the guiding principle of the state, accordingly includes as its highest element not the indiscriminate encouragement of any kind of religion, but a necessary relation of public life to the only true religion, that is, the Roman Catholic religion. Thus the (Catholic) state can fulfill its purpose aright only when, recognizing

[10] Leo XIII, encyclical *Sapientiae Christianae.*
[11] *Ibid.*

that the Roman Church possesses supernatural truth and divinely given supremacy, it furthers the common life according to the due directions given by that church, so that in this way the endeavor of the citizens after virtue, and thus after the eternal good, is in every respect facilitated and promoted. This means that the state truly fulfills its purpose only when it accomplishes its service in the spirit of obedience, recognizing the direct authority of the church in spiritual things and its indirect authority in things temporal. The end of the state is determined by the end of the church, which is of a higher order because it is supernatural. Thus the supra-political activity of the church, by the very fact that it is supra-political, acquires the highest political relevance.

At this point, which represents the zenith of the Roman Catholic political ideal, it is fitting that we allow the greatest political philosopher among the recent popes to speak for himself:

> Nature did not fashion society with intent that man should seek in it his last end, but that in it and through it he should find suitable aims whereby to attain to his own perfection. If then a civil government strives after external advantages merely, and the attainment of such objects as adorn life; if in administering public affairs it is wont to put God aside and show no solicitude for the upholding of moral law, it deflects woefully from its right course and from the injunctions of nature: nor should such a gathering together and association of men be accounted as a commonwealth, but only as a deceitful imitation and make-believe of civil organization.[12]
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> . . . . . .
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> As a consequence, the state, constituted as it is, is clearly bound to act up to the manifold and weighty duties linking it to God by the public profession of religion. Nature and reason, which command every individual devoutly to worship God in holiness, because we belong to him, and must return to him,

[12] Leo XIII, *ibid.*

since from him we came, bind also the civil community by a like law. For men living together in society are under the power of God no less than are individuals, and society, no less than individuals, owes gratitude to God, who gave it being and maintains it, and whose ever bounteous goodness enriches it with countless blessings. Since, then, no one is allowed to be remiss in the service due to God, and since the chief duty of all men is to cling to religion in both its teaching and practice — not such religion as they may have a preference for, but the religion which God enjoins and which certain and most clear marks show to be the only one true religion — it is a public crime to act as though there were no God. So too is it a sin in the state not to have care for religion, as something beyond its scope or as of no practical benefit; or out of many forms of religion to adopt that one which chimes in with the fancy; for we are bound absolutely to worship God in that way which he has shown to be his will. All who rule, therefore, should hold in honor the holy name of God, and one of their chief duties must be to favor religion, to protect it, to shield it under the credit and sanctions of the laws, and neither to organize nor enact any measure that may compromise its safety. This is the bounden duty of rulers to the people over whom they rule; for one and all we are destined, by our birth and adoption, to enjoy, when this frail and fleeting life is ended, a supreme and final good in heaven, and to the attainment of this every endeavor should be directed. Since, then, upon this depends the full and perfect happiness of mankind, the securing of this end should be of all imaginable interests the most urgent. Hence civil society, established for the common welfare, should not only safeguard the well-being of the community, but have also at heart the interests of its individual members, in such mode as not in any way to hinder but in every manner to render as easy as may be the possession of that highest and unchangeable good for which all should seek. Wherefore, for this purpose, care must especially be taken to preserve unharmed and unimpeded the religion whereof the practice is the link connecting man with his God.[13]

[13] Leo XIII, encyclical *Immortale Dei*.

V

AN EASTERN ORTHODOX VIEW

TO GIVE a brief answer to the question of the present attitude of Orthodox Christianity to the state is far more difficult than in the case of Roman Catholicism. The doctrinal formlessness of Orthodoxy (except at some particularly important points), the great differences of view within the Orthodox churches themselves, and the impossibility of giving any picture which is not misleading without a personal knowledge of Orthodox Church life: these facts force us — however desirable it might have been to do otherwise — to abstain from any attempt to give an introductory sketch of the doctrinal presuppositions of Orthodox political thought.[1] The picture which we shall give is further limited by the fact that we shall consider only the conception of the state held by a particular group of Russian thinkers, and that we shall not deal with the possibly divergent conceptions within other Orthodox churches.[2]

The historical situation from which the view of the state taken by these writers proceeds is that of the Russian Revolution. That revolution has made a deep cleft in the long, unbroken tradition of Russian Christian thought, and has compelled the members of the Russian Orthodox Church to

1 The reader may be referred to Visser 't Hooft's book, *Anglo-Catholicism and Orthodoxy,* and the works of Arseniev and Zankov.

2 Besides the papers of Fedotov and Vycheslavtsev in *Die Kirche und das Staatsproblem in der Gegenwart,* we may refer to Berdyaev's books: *De la Destination de l'homme; The Fate of Man in the Modern World; The End of Our Time.*

rethink completely the whole problem of the state. It was Byzantium which proclaimed that the ideal solution of the relation between church and state consisted in keeping the two spheres autonomous and in principle independent of each other, while at the same time they cooperated harmoniously. But it cannot be maintained that the Byzantine ideal of " symphony " was ever historically fulfilled.[3] And now the Bolshevist Revolution has created an entirely new situation for Orthodox Christendom as a whole. This situation, however, opens up possibilities for a freer and more genuinely Orthodox discussion of the political systems and practices of a modern age.

The group of Russian Orthodox thinkers includes individuals whose opinions differ widely, yet on the whole it represents a distinctive point of view. This view may be summed up as follows: Negatively, it consists in a decided rejection of Thomism, both of its philosophical and its theological implications, and of its doctrine of the state; equally decidedly, it rejects the individualism and subjectivism supposed to be peculiarly characteristic of Protestantism. Positively, it is characterized by a strong emphasis upon the tragic dualism in the nature of the state, in that the state, as an institution of power, is indeed a divine instrument for the restraint of the evil and chaotic elements in this sinful world, but is at the same time an instrument of the demonic forces of evil. This conception of the state comes very close to certain Protestant conceptions, discussed in a later part of this book. Fedotov has formulated the peculiar dual character of the state in a pregnant passage:

> Power or sovereignty, as part of the hierarchy of salvation of the divine love, belongs to the richness of the divine nature in whose image man was created. Man has been called to rule the

[3] Cf. *Die Kirche und das Staatsproblem in der Gegenwart,* p. 37.

world with God, and, as a member of the human family, must base his relations to his fellow men on love. . . . Through the fall, disharmony and strife have taken the place of the natural harmony of love in human life. In the communal life of humanity power has assumed the form of law and has girded on the sword of compulsion in order to carry out its ideal task in the service of love. It has become a complicated and contradictory phenomenon — a weapon used in the fight against sin, and simultaneously an instrument of sin.[4]

This fundamental view leads to a dual attitude toward the state. The state is power and compulsion, but it is absolutely necessary that it should be so, in order that it may be an external safeguard against the mighty forces of sinful disorder. The extraordinary significance of the power of the state lies in the fact that it makes possible and guarantees at least a minimum of personal cultural and religious freedom. The whole paradox of the political order is revealed in the fact that it guarantees freedom and personal existence by means of its legal compulsion, although it is itself sharply opposed to sacrifice, love, devotion, freedom, and other personal values. As an earthly instrument in the hand of Almighty God in his fight against the sinister, destructive and anticreative forces of evil, the state does, however dimly, reflect the pure and perfect power of the eternal God.

But the state is " also an instrument of sin," and is entangled more than any other social institution in the net of destructive titanic forces. It is indeed an element in human civilization, in the wider sense of the word; but it stands at the lowest level in the hierarchy of values. Thus when the church tries to extend her influence over every sphere of human life she finds the state the most inaccessible sphere of all. While it is possible to speak of a Christian personality, a Christian culture, or a Christian society,

[4] *Die Kirche und das Staatsproblem in der Gegenwart,* p. 35.

we can only in a very limited sense call a state " Christian." According to Berdyaev, to speak of the " Christian " state involves a dangerous failure to understand the ineradicable and tragic dualism in the nature of the state, and constitutes the first stage in the process of its deification.

These Russian thinkers lay particular emphasis upon the dual nature of the power possessed by the state. Although willed by God and instituted for defense against chaos, the power of the state is at the same time a terrible and destructive servant of evil, and is continually rebelling against God by asserting its own absolute sovereignty. This tendency toward " ideocracy," that is, the will to assert itself as the tyrannical, all-controlling central idea of life — a tendency which constantly reappears in varying forms throughout the whole course of history — reveals an essential element of the state. The ideal of ideocracy and the ideal of free theocracy are mutually exclusive. The Christian faith, in its clear-sighted, realistic view of the world, must therefore recognize that the state is the most evident manifestation of the fact that this world of ours has fallen away from the freedom of the kingdom of God, and that it " lieth in the wicked one." The fact that the tendency to make the state into an absolute still possesses an ever renewed power to attract men and women to an enthusiastic devotion to the state — in spite of its way of destroying all personal creative life — makes this problem painfully acute. An accurate expression of the view of the state held by these thinkers is therefore to be found in the dictum of Vladimir Solovyev that the task of the state does not consist in setting up paradise on earth, but in preventing the earth from becoming hell.

Accordingly, as we are taught by the Bible and by the whole classical tradition of Christianity, obedience to the state is required of the Christian insofar as the state pur-

sues its primary restraining purpose of controlling disorder by force and of directing social life toward the greatest possible measure of justice. From the outset the Christian view excludes all glorification of the state and all optimistic political utopianism; yet the Christian faith may, and indeed should, cherish the hope that through the mighty grace of God in his church the "demonic point of the sword of the state may in the course of history be blunted" (Fedotov).

These Russian thinkers, as we have seen, lay great emphasis on the element of power in the idea of the state. Vycheslavtsev, for instance, in an essay, "The Religious Meaning of Power," [5] gives clear expression to the views of this group. In his view the insoluble difficulty of giving a clear answer to the question of the Christian view of the state lies in the very nature of the case, in the mysterious, antinomic nature of political power, which cannot be deduced by any logical process of argument. This power is distinguished by the peculiar fact that it proceeds both from God and from the devil. The Pauline dictum, "There is no power but of God," is no mere private opinion of the apostle, but finds its confirmation in the whole process of revelation as recorded in the Old and New Testaments. The omnipotent God is himself the source and giver of power. To Christ belongs "all power in heaven and on earth."

But all the positive utterances of Holy Scripture regarding political power must on no account lead us to overlook its utterances concerning the demonic character of that power. The attitude toward the rulers of this world proclaimed in the Book of Revelation is just as relevant to Christian political thought as are the utterances of St. Paul

[5] "Der religiöse Sinn der Macht," in *Die Kirche und das Staatsproblem in der Gegenwart*, pp. 183–206.

in Romans 13. We have no right to gloss over the polarity in the biblical interpretation of power, which can be plainly perceived, nor ought we to regard it as a foreign body in our view of the Christian faith as a whole. It is in full accordance with faith's realistic insight into the tragic antinomy of the whole world-process, an antinomy of which the solution is to be found only in the Christian understanding of history and its end. The idea that power is a " neutral instrument " which may be used in the service of good as well as of evil is therefore a pseudo-solution which makes power appear innocuous by failing to do justice to its true nature. Likewise, to try to get rid of this antinomy by regarding the statements of Scripture concerning the omnipotence of God and the kingship of Christ merely as rhetoric or empty metaphor, and accordingly all earthly forms of power as satanic, is an untenable proposition. On the contrary, the Christian faith must hold fast to the mysterious, dual nature of all political authority, with its strange and obscure combination of divine and demonic power. " The power which arose on earth after the fall includes simultaneously an element which cannot be recognized as right from the moral point of view, and an element which is morally necessary."

Vycheslavtsev endeavors to open up the way for a deeper understanding of the true nature of power by means of a phenomenological analysis. Power to rule necessarily involves a relation of command and obedience, of super- and sub-ordination. The special element which distinguishes this relation from all others is the fact that the command is incomprehensible, arbitrary and incontestable, and that the act of obedience is blind and unconditional and therefore excludes the exercise of the individual will. " Power which is cruel, unjust and senseless shows most clearly that in principle power is independent of the valuation

and judgment, of the thought and will, of the one who obeys. This opaque, sinister element in the command, from the point of view of the one who obeys, still exists even in the most civilized, lawful and humane exercise of power." The phenomenon of power must also be distinguished from request, counsel and hierarchical authority. The exercise of power by modern states, which is influenced throughout by law and controlled and criticized by the subjects, does not constitute a really valid piece of evidence against this definition of the nature of power. On the contrary, all the ceaseless attempts of modern states to weaken the ruling power and to limit it by legal means and by methods of control support the argument for the irrational, domineering, demonic nature of that power. "The greatest good is always beyond force and above power. The greatest evil always reveals itself through the exercise of power." Vycheslavtsev finds this view confirmed in the fact that the greatest crimes in history — the crucifixion of Christ, the deaths of the martyrs, the execution of Socrates — were actually carried out by the power of the state.

But in spite of its peculiar character, which is opposed to the dignity of man and the independence of personal life, power to rule must not be rejected in any anarchical way. The positive Christian estimate of the state is based upon the belief that "the evil which power includes is a necessary and minimal evil, because power creates order and combats disorganization." This is the justification and the end of the power of the state: to create in the common life of men in society an order based upon justice according to the will of God. In history, which is involved in sin, power to rule is indispensable,

and the stronger the disorder and evil, the stronger and the more inflexible that power must be. In this sense, the ruling

power really does not "bear the sword in vain"; and the ruler who fights evil in the name of justice, who sublimates force with the help of the law, and who is at the same time conscious of the fleeting character and the secondary significance of this exercise of power, can really be called a "servant of God." In history, then, the thesis of power is and must be maintained; and yet above it there soar the higher principles of justice and love which continually remind men that the ideal unity and harmony can never be created by the earthly power alone.

Throughout all its legitimate and necessary activity of maintaining order and law, the demonic, destructive tendency of all political power remains unconquerable, vigorous and living. Therein lies its tragic antinomy. The ideal of an order of perfect justice can never be realized in the sphere of the state and by political means. It points toward the transfiguration of the world in the kingdom of God, which in its "powerless power" and in the perfect hierarchy of love provides the final solution of the tragic antinomy of power — a solution which is anticipated in the *Sobornost,* the church's free community of love.

VI

ANGLICAN THEORIES OF THE STATE

AT THE OUTSET the question might be raised: In a discussion of the Christian conception of the state, have we any right to speak of an "Anglican" view in particular? The historical development of Anglicanism shows a continual tension between its Catholic and Protestant elements, in which sometimes the one, sometimes the other, seems to gain the upper hand. It might appear to be more in accordance with the facts to trace the political and ethical views prevailing in the Anglican communion to either the Catholic or the Protestant point of view. The fact that the Anglican Church is disinclined to make doctrinal definitions and to lay down fixed principles, coupled with its preference for a practical *modus vivendi,* do not make it any easier to decide this question. In point of fact it would be quite possible to trace the conceptions of the state held by Anglican thinkers to the influence of either the Catholic or the Protestant tradition. Nevertheless in this chapter we shall deal with a special Anglican type, based on the considered opinion of authoritative representatives of Anglicanism itself.

This type, in its comprehensiveness and elasticity, in its simultaneous emphasis upon the traditions of the undivided church and the spiritual heritage of antiquity, and upon its connection with the thought of the Reformation, constitutes a peculiar synthesis of Catholic and Protestant elements which can hardly be expressed in theological formulas. There is accordingly no consistent body of thought

which can be called specifically "Anglican"; this is partly due to the fact that the interest of Anglicanism is mainly directed to questions other than those of explicit statements of doctrine. It is one of the characteristic features of Anglicanism that its conception of the state and of the attitude to be adopted toward it has never been systematically formulated. As a rule the attitude of the Anglican Church has been decided practically — by the church as a whole and by its individual members — in relation to historical events and circumstances, without much reflection on the inner connection between basic affirmations and practical conduct. Here, therefore, there can be no question of giving an outline either of the fundamental ideas which all Anglican Christians recognize as controlling their thought about the state, or of *the* Anglican doctrine of the state, because nothing of the kind exists.

Here we shall allow two men to speak for themselves who represent different trends of thought within the Anglican communion — the Right Reverend William Temple, present Archbishop of York, and the Reverend V. A. Demant, representing the group of Anglo-catholic sociologists. For the sake of convenience, we will confine ourselves to giving a brief outline of the general theological standpoint of the latter.[1]

The doctrine of man as the image of God, of his nature and his position in the cosmos, is fundamental for Demant's approach to social and political questions. In his divine wisdom as Creator, God has created the world not in chaotic disorder but as a hierarchy of living beings, a harmonious *communitas communitatum,* which is ordered toward

[1] Cf. his book *God, Man and Society,* and various essays in *Christendom: A Journal of Christian Sociology.* For the theological background of Dr. Temple's conception of the state, cf. *Christianity and the State,* pp. 1 ff. The following passages are particularly illuminating: pp. 33, 39, 41 ff.

the highest end, the glory and the eternal service of God. The hierarchy of functions in the world and in human society is reflected in man, the microcosm. It is the distinctive dignity of man that although he is part of creation, as one who has been " made in the image of God," he has been created to share in the divine work of creation and in the divine control over the fortunes of this earthly world.

But the original harmony has not been preserved. Man aspired to become an autonomous creator. His sin consists in his attempt to break through the ordered structure in which his creator has set him, and to make himself — man — the center of the universe. By perverting his own faculty of creation man has dragged nature and history into sin, along with himself. The extensive perversion of the harmonious relation between means and ends, and the disintegration of all social life, spring from man's spiritual pride. So human sin exercises an ever widening influence upon the originally good order of creation and assumes concrete form in the manifold ends, activities and social institutions of man's life in community. Not only is sin an actively destructive power in the relation between man and God, and man and his neighbors, but it also breaks down the boundary walls between the various spheres of human activity which were originally harmoniously related to one another and sets one against the other: politics against ethics, faith against reason, patriotism against finance, agriculture against industry, and so on, *ad infinitum*.

This fact explains, according to Demant, the peculiar dialectical relationship between culture and sin — which are both in a different way the outcome of man's creativity — since on the one hand culture counteracts the social effects of sin, but, on the other hand, it also vastly accentuates and increases them. That is to say, cultural activity implies that men who are separated from one another by sin

group themselves together in all kinds of ways in the pursuit of common interests and purposes. Thus the destructive effects of sin upon community are to a certain extent neutralized, since there arises, as a by-product of the association of men for common ends, a species of community which at least bears some resemblance to the natural community instituted by God.

From this point of view, the cultural activities of men in the widest sense can be regarded as a means for creating real fellowship. Culture must at the same time, however, be regarded from another point of view. While on the one hand it means the integration of the conscious and unconscious instincts and ends of men, and so leads toward community, on the other hand it also means a gigantic and increasing conflict between the interests and purposes which it brings together. It is this which constitutes its deepest tragedy, a tragedy which cannot be solved from within. All these forms of association may become, and indeed do become, powerful forces of sinful disintegration. This trend is greatly intensified by the fact that these conflicts of interests and purposes — as cultural life becomes more complex and so increases the possibility of conflict between the various functions of society — become increasingly operative beneath the surface of conscious life; consequently their cumulative effect is very far-reaching. Thus with the progress of culture — in itself a triumph of the human spirit — the forces of evil also expand and become increasingly operative as a hidden, mysterious power which perverts the natural differences of life into sinister and destructive conflicts.

The conception of man as an autonomous being, and the dissolution of all organic and natural ties, product of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, combined with man's amazing control over nature by technical means, are some

of the main causes which have produced the present situation. No other previous era can equal the one in which we are now living in its chaotic collapse of the natural social structure, in the excessive growth of isolated functions within society and thus in the demonic character of its civilization. The objective effects of sin in the corporate life of humanity have gained such a momentum of their own and have thrown the functions of life into such confusion that the human spirit has lost both its knowledge of the ordered relation of means and ends within social activity and also that ruling and controlling power over temporal events which is based upon the fact that man cooperates with God in the work of creation.

It is precisely at this point, according to this view, that the unique significance of the Christian doctrine of the nature and destiny of man becomes evident. The problem can be stated thus: Are there any stable criteria which can enable us to shed light upon this sin-entangled chaos and to discover and reconstruct the original, God-given relation between all the different functions and activities in human society? To this we reply: Indeed there are; because man has been ordained by God to share in his work of creation and government upon this earth, all forms of social activity should be serviceable to man. The supernatural destiny of man, and the ordered relationship of functions and needs inherent in his nature, afford us a definite criterion for judging the structure of society and for reshaping the social order into greater conformity with the divine order. The nature of man, with its hierarchy of functions, is accordingly the most important source of knowledge for Christian sociology. It is true that this criterion yields us no rigid system fixed forever *in concreto;* but it yields certain immutable, regulative and constructive norms which, amid the continual transformation of social relationships

and purposes, reveal the fundamental features of a social order which is Christian and thus "natural" in the true sense of the word.

Thus, so far as social life is concerned the teaching office of the church is entrusted with the responsible task, not merely of dealing with the social motives of man, but also — and especially — of pronouncing a judgment upon the ends and forms of social life by indicating their relative agreement or nonagreement with the essential needs of human nature. The secular world is still plunged in chaos. The church alone possesses supernatural insight into the nature of man and things. She alone — as being herself a redeemed society and the divine priest of humanity — possesses the supernatural power to lead human society toward its redemption, by restoring the order God intended for it.

What, then, are the characteristic features of the conception of the origin, nature and purpose of the state presented by the Anglican thinkers with whom we are here concerned. If we study some of the central elements in their interpretation of the state we shall soon see that they are carrying the line of the Catholic tradition of political philosophy a stage further — with this difference, that while Temple's view is more comprehensive, and emphasizes other currents within Christian thought, Demant's view is definitely nearer the Thomistic position.

"The state is the coordinating organ, inherent in the nature of man, of human social functions." This formula of Demant's shows clearly how he deduces and justifies the existence of the state from the nature of man. Man is by nature a being in whom individual and social elements are indissolubly united. The tendency of human nature toward community finds its expression through the family, the tribe, the nation and through all kinds of cultural as-

sociations, in accordance with the aims given by the Creator, and thus provides personal life with new opportunities for development and enrichment. It is here that we find the origin of and the sanction for the state. The state grows out of the social tendencies implanted in man and must be understood as an ordering and regulative organ which effects a balanced adjustment and equilibrium between the functions and ends within the community which otherwise would tend to fly apart. As society is a natural phenomenon, so also is the state, being itself a function of society endowed with special authority.

The fact that the origin of the state lies in the nature of man himself as a social being does not, however, justify man in an arbitrary disregard or even contempt for its unique authority. The state is sovereign within its own sphere and is justified in demanding obedience. The Christian, in particular, has no right to try to escape from the dilemma of his double loyalty to church and state by denying the authority of the state. On the other hand, however, the fact that the state is naturally needed for the life of the community must not lead man to overestimate it or to make it absolute. Both these assertions are based on the fact that the state, as a natural phenomenon, is ordained by God and ultimately derives both its sanction and its peculiar dignity from that fact. Dr. Temple is doubtless expressing a conviction common to the Anglican communion as a whole when he says:

> If, then, we believe in any divine suzerainty of the universe, we shall find here [i.e., in society] a sphere of divine activity; and to whatever has over this society an authority vindicated by society's own need of such authority, we shall not hesitate to attribute a divine origin and a divine right.[2]

The only effective way to limit the authority of the state is to

[2] Temple, *Christianity and the State,* pp. 89–90.

regard that authority as bestowed by God for certain purposes. . . . No doubt to call it a human contrivance is to pay it less honor than to call it a divine institution. But the despised contrivance in practice dominates human life; while the honored institution can be made to serve it.[3]

The state is thus conceived as a natural organ of society which coordinates and controls its manifold functions and associations with supreme decisive authority and has been invested with this authority by God himself. Both Temple and Demant lay special stress upon the view that force cannot be regarded as the *differentia specifica* of this all-embracing organ of society, with its function of creating and preserving order. They agree with the great traditional Catholic doctrine of the state in rejecting every conception which seeks to derive the state from the existence of evil, or to describe it as being essentially sinful.

The Christian faith does indeed recognize that the power of sin operates in a variety of ways in the social life of man and destroys the original harmony of social ends. In certain circumstances, therefore, the coordinating impulse of the state must assert itself by force or compulsion in order to be effective at all. To Demant, however, this does not mean that it is force which constitutes the state. The power to use force does not belong to the substance of the state, but is an accidental element springing out of empirical necessities. Temple holds the view that the instrument of force belongs to the necessary equipment of the state, in order that it may be able to carry out in this world the special task entrusted to it by God. The fact that it is born of necessity does not, however, justify any glorification of force, or any acquiescence in the misuse of force by the state. Force is only to be used in the last resort, as a necessary means to a necessary end, that is, law and order. This

[3] Temple, *Essays in Christian Politics,* pp. 32–33.

end provides the norm for an ethical judgment on the use of force.

> Force is entrusted to the state in order that the state may effectively prevent the lawless use of force; and from the moral standpoint the use of force to uphold a law designed for the general well-being against any who try to use force contrary to the general well-being, is in a totally different class from the force which is thus kept in check.[4]
>
> The force with which the state is entrusted is the means of making actual and effective this universality of law.[5]

The chief characteristic of the state, at all times and in all places, is the fact that it embodies and enforces *law*. Without a law which can assert itself with ultimate authority men cannot lead an ordered and peaceful community life, either as individuals or as members of social groups. Precisely in its capacity as the protector of law the state is "the precondition of the maintenance of all common or social life." [6] It is this which gives political authority its right to exist and at the same time limits the sphere of its authority. Temple's reflections upon political questions lead him, therefore, logically to the following definition: "The state is a necessary organ of the national community, maintaining through law, as promulgated by a government endowed to this end with coercive power, the universal external conditions of social order." [7]

The question, however, now arises: Are there any specifically Christian criteria for forming a judgment on law, or is the Christian citizen obediently to accept as law that which a particular government promulgates as law? In Temple's view the distinctive quality of law resides in its universality, stability and reliability. When we perceive

4 Temple, *Christ and the Way to Peace,* p. 15.
5 Temple, *Christianity and the State,* p. 113.
6 *Op. cit.,* p. 126.
7 *Op. cit.,* pp. 123–24.

the danger of social disintegration — a danger which is a constant menace whose reality is but confirmed and deepened by the Christian understanding of the world and of man — we see clearly that a law which may perhaps correspond only slightly with the ideal demands of justice, but is firmly administered, without respect of persons, is better than the best law which is either not enforced at all, or, if it *is* enforced, is administered only in a partial and arbitrary way. For men can order their cultural, moral and spiritual life in peace and security only if the general legal fabric of society is firm and reliable, even though it may be also rather crude and narrow. The guiding principle must always be: "It is desirable that it [the law] should be just; it is essential that it should be stable." [8] This must not, however, be misunderstood to mean that Christians are not summoned to make the Christian principles of the sanctity of personality, the fact of community, and the duty of service operative in the whole realm of law, in cooperation with other socially constructive forces.

Discussing the view maintained in the COPEC report that it is "the function of the state in the first place to maintain order, . . . a legal order, . . . as the sense of justice in the community shall direct," [9] Demant gives a lengthy exposition, from his own Anglo-catholic point of view, of this question of law and justice as an element in the state.[10] He quotes Kant's remark that the formation of a state would be possible "even for a race of devils, if intelligent," in order to show that Christian thought about the state cannot rest content with the achievement of a social equilibrium which has no particular moral basis as a criterion. Sooner or later a state which confined itself to a merely negative con-

[8] Temple, *Christianity and the State,* p. 122.
[9] COPEC Commission report, *Politics and Citizenship,* pp. 14 f.
[10] *God, Man and Society,* pp. 100 ff.

trol of the disruptive forces in the community would collapse and would only "make confusion worse confounded" by its convulsive efforts to restore order.

Demant finds a striking confirmation of this view in the "growing failure of the modern state to maintain peace and order." This failure may be due to the fact that modern politics has "no other aim than the *merely* social one of peace and external order"; so far as the question of the just order is concerned, the modern state is absolutely neutral, and indeed it cannot help being neutral, because it is not based upon any total conception of life which includes morality and justice. "There is no valid body of opinion by which the purpose or efficiency of the state can be judged. We are left with the abstract criterion of whether it, the state, can hold itself together." [11] The modern state justifies its existence by the fact that it can preserve its own life. It is this justification which has made it possible for various groups, representing special interests, to gain a large measure of control over the state and thus to give the appearance of political legitimacy to the exaggerated development of their own partial aims. In the process, however, other social interests, perhaps equally or even more justified, have been suppressed. The consequence is that formal legality and the exercise of force become prominent in political life.

Demant does not, however, confine himself to this sociological analysis of the political situation of the present day. With an explicit reference to the medieval doctrine of natural law, he comes to the conclusion that a state in order to be a true state must embody the just order, and that its task consists in "the *right* ordering of the various activities of society, domestic, economic, technical, educational, cultural, and so on." [12] Further, this means that

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 154.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 183.

the state is a real state only insofar as it directs its organization of social life toward the universal order of justice, with its hierarchy of means and ends. " ' Rightness ' in the dimension of social relations is dependent upon ' rightness ' in the other dimension which comprehends man as a natural, social and spiritual being and gives all his activities a relative place in an order of which his spiritual essence and destiny is the ultimate energy, interpreter and crown." [13]

The preceding remarks will have already suggested what these Anglican thinkers regard as the end of the state; all we need do is to produce the line a little further. The end of the state consists first of all in protecting and encouraging the ordered interplay and the due development of the individuals and groups within the community. The end of political activity is " the temporal well-being and happiness " [14] of the community. In temporal affairs, therefore, the state may limit to a considerable extent the rights of individuals and groups, even going so far as to demand the sacrifice of property or even of life itself if such sacrifice be absolutely indispensable for the maintenance of the life of the whole, although here the state should proceed with the greatest prudence and caution. If, however, the state, in accordance with its task of protection and service, desires to concern itself with " the fullness of life in the community," [15] then it must recognize not only that man is more than a citizen, but also that the supra-political functions of man necessarily determine his conduct as a citizen. In the hierarchy of values the family, economics, art, etc., are spheres of the common life which rank higher than the

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 179.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 182.
[15] Temple, *Christianity and the State*, p. 127.

sphere of politics, and accordingly are contributing factors in determining the aim and the limits of politics.

The vital thing is, however, that the community of which the state is an organ consists of persons, that is, beings with a supernatural claim and end, beings who are called to serve God eternally in the perfect freedom of his Son. "The individual is immortal and the state is not; that is the fundamental conviction which must always distinguish Christian politics from secular politics."[16] Temple can therefore say also that "the end of the state is freedom,"[17] freedom from oppression, material uncertainty and distress, freedom which gives man the possibility of choice and of developing his higher personal faculties. The political sphere, like every other sphere of human activity, is a reality which transcends itself and is directed toward the supernatural end of man. It would be a heresy for the political authority to treat man as if it had power over his spiritual destiny. The Christian doctrine of the nature and the destiny of man alone provides the true standard for the understanding of the place and the task of politics in human life as a whole. The church alone, as a supernatural body, is in a position to give the answer to the fundamental questions of human existence; at the same time, therefore, according to its divine commission, it proclaims the true meaning of political power.[18]

The enigmatic character of the state — that is, that it is both indispensable on earth and yet always pointing beyond itself — is finely expressed by Temple in a passage which may fittingly close this chapter:

[16] Temple, *Essays on Christian Politics,* p. 39.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] Cf. Demant, *God, Man and Society,* pp. 117 ff., on "The Essentials of Christian Politics."

The state with its law supplies the firm foundation on which man can build the spiritual edifice of a corporate life transcending earthly limitations. The state is still necessary to him while he lives on earth, but it suffers nothing from his claim to possess a higher citizenship than it has to offer. The humblest child of God has a rank above that of earthly emperors. The state as we have conceived it will help him to live worthily of his high destiny, and will fulfill itself in supplying the external conditions which make possible a spiritual development forever beyond its ken.[19]

[19] Temple, *Christianity and the State,* p. 140.

VII

CONTINENTAL PROTESTANTISM: THE DOCTRINE OF THE ORDERS

When we turn to continental Protestantism and inquire into its conception of the state such a question at first sight seems meaningless. The wealth and diversity of the conceptions of the state within all the churches and Christian bodies which bear the name "Protestant" is so varied and so confusing that it is impossible to give an adequate answer to this question. These conceptions ring all imaginable changes on the idea of the state. They range from the idealist's depreciation of the state or the anarchist's absolute denial up to the most extreme form of the conservative deification of the state. Yet each in turn justifies his point of view by appealing to the principles of Protestantism.

If, however, we sift the ideas which lie behind these various views we find it possible to reduce the alternative views to a few main types. The following survey will be confined to a description of some of these types, as they emerge in the passionate struggle which is now going on within continental Protestantism for a new understanding of the meaning of the state. The outstanding characteristic of this struggle, and one which gives it a special claim on the attention of ecumenical Christendom, is the deliberate effort to establish this Christian ethic of politics upon the central doctrines of the Christian faith, and then from that standpoint to come to terms with the new political situation in modern Europe.

When we begin to inquire into the views of the state which prevail within these churches — especially in those which use the German tongue — inevitably, and at every turn, as we study their underlying assumptions, their explicit statements and their heated controversies, we are confronted by the word "order" (*Ordnung*). The intensive study of the problem of the state as a problem for Christian thought takes place for the most part within the categories of the "orders." The search for the will of God for the state, and for the political duty of the Christian, finds its doctrinal foundation and its terminology in the so-called "doctrine of the orders." It will, therefore, be worth while to study these theories in some detail, and useful from two points of view: first, in order to make the following observations on the political thought of the continental Protestantism of the present day more intelligible to the reader who is unfamiliar with this terminology; second, because this "doctrine of the orders" brings out into the open those underlying assumptions of the Protestant view of the state which are so often hidden from sight, and in so doing provides the right point of contact for an ecumenical discussion.

The passion which characterizes the controversy concerning the Christian meaning of the orders may seem strange to the outside observer. Some preliminary observations of a general character may serve to show that this controversy is no mere matter of words or of hairsplitting doctrinal definitions, but that its real aim is to arrive at and bring out the meaning and the implications of evangelical Christianity for human life in the modern world.

In the search for a theology and ethic of the orders — for a Christian "ordinology" [1] — we find that a very signifi-

[1] This word is variously rendered as "theology of the orders," or "doctrine of the orders." (Tr.)

cant change is taking place within continental Protestantism. To put it briefly, it signifies a revolt, inspired by a renewed belief in the religious motives of the Reformation, against the spirit of modernist Protestantism, with its humanized gospel and its individualistic view of the common life.

The fact that the idea of progress in civilization has broken down so badly in Europe in recent years — and indeed in Europe in particular — coupled with the shock of finding that the world was not gradually improving in a kind of inevitable way, as had been formerly believed, has forced continental Protestantism to face the question: What, indeed, does the gospel mean for the troubles and the hopes — whether economic, political or spiritual — of mankind today?

Gradually continental Protestantism has emerged from its relatively secure and even partially idyllic existence, and it now stands gazing with horror into the abyss of chaos. The sunlit heaven of the preceding historical era has suddenly been darkened by apocalyptic thunderclouds. The house of a settled church life, built upon the ground of a common European spiritual inheritance, has been shaken by the violent and stormy winds of a new era. Suddenly men have discovered that the foundation was not of rock, nor was the house secure. Continental Protestantism, its message and its whole life, in its close connection with the existing political, economic and cultural forces of the day, has been profoundly affected by the general crisis. In his anxiety and despair European man sees the proud world which he has himself erected falling to pieces about his ears. Increasingly he has become conscious that what he is experiencing is not one of the usual fluctuations of circumstances within what used to be regarded as the steady march of progress in civilization, but that it marks the end of an

epoch. Not only this or that form of human social life is being challenged; the very foundations of human existence and community as a whole are being shaken.

In the midst of this disintegrating secularized civilization and religion new beliefs, ideals and forces are emerging from the deep, irrational levels of the subconscious life, forces which promise to give a new meaning, a new spirit of fellowship and a new security to the life of man. The disturbing question of the *Decline of the West* is being met with assurance, with a ringing message of promised victory, with prophetic promises of a new earth which will compensate in every direction for the misery and emptiness of the present day. The vacuum which had been created by the message of a largely secularized Christianity, which had obscured the sovereignty of the holy and loving God, is now filled by new authorities who claim joyful surrender and unhesitating loyalty. In class, state and people new centers of organization are being formed which give a new and thorough integration and effectiveness to life as a whole and assert that they can create new order out of chaos and give man new vision, elasticity and energy.

And what of the church? Has her message of redemption in Christ anything to say to this bewildering combination of complete integration and complete disintegration, of irreligious secularism and newborn enthusiasm and faith? Does the church regard the question of order and disorder in human society as irrelevant? Or does her message express some prophetic truth which alone can give a right perspective and an inspiring direction to the organization of human affairs? Is the church herself also partly responsible for the social, political and spiritual confusion of the present day?

When continental Protestantism faced this question it made the painful and humiliating discovery that it had

very little to say in reply, but that the question itself could not be evaded. It then became aware that it had distorted and weakened the gospel when it forgot to proclaim that Christ has a word, and indeed, *the* decisive word, even for the *homo economicus* and the *homo politicus*. It became aware that this new concern for the social responsibility of Christianity implied the need for a new ethic which would place the thronging social, political and other problems of the modern world in the light of the pure gospel. It was a natural result of this situation that the eyes of continental Protestantism were opened to see the limitations and weaknesses of the traditional understanding of the Christian ethos. Lutheranism above all incurred the reproach of having confined its attention — on the whole — to the sphere of individual ethics and, through its social indifference, of sharing to some extent in the responsibility for the collapse of the social order. In the realm of social and political justice Christian preachers had usually been content to utter vague generalizations and pious exhortations to love and political loyalty. There was no specifically Christian view which could throw light — " in terms of a modern world " — on all the questions which confront man in his daily life with other human beings; even the legitimacy of such an undertaking was sometimes denied on theological grounds. The Christian life seemed on the verge of degenerating into a species of religious and ethical " private-mindedness," with the inevitable result that the influence of Christian faith upon the whole course of public life was fading away.

Another important element in the situation, which gave to this search for a Christian " theology of the orders " a decidedly religious inspiration and a theological direction, can be mentioned only very briefly at this point, as it has already been mentioned and will be constantly mentioned

in the following pages. This element is the new interest in and understanding of the message of the Reformation. Here we find the ultimate roots of the present rejection of a humanized and individualistic Christianity, although of course other factors have also played their part in this matter. In recent years, and especially during the post-war period, the great formulas of *justificatio sola fide* and *solo Deo gloria,* in which Luther and Calvin and their followers expressed their joyful new discovery of the pure gospel and which completely dominated the spiritual situation of that epoch, have once more become living realities. The universal sovereignty of the redeeming love of God; the personalistic and dramatic conception of the divine conflict with the destructive powers of the world; the unmerited gift of communion with God through faith, apart from all human merit or moral and religious strain and effort; sanctification not as a self-achievement of the isolated human being but as the grateful sharing of the divine love with one's neighbor — these are different ways of expressing the central motif of this awakening.

One interesting result of this rediscovery of the central truths of the gospel has been that it has led to a renewed study of the problems of religious belief and practice in every direction. Even in the sphere of social ethics this tendency has manifested itself in an extraordinarily stimulating ferment of ideas. Fresh emphasis has been laid upon the category of personal community and solidarity — a conception which is opposed to both the predominant systems — the individualistic and collectivistic alike. This category, however, receives its special religious character from the fact that it does not originate in the autonomous individual — who for one reason or another arbitrarily seeks contact with other individuals — but in the sovereign

act of the loving God who has created man in responsible community, with mutual obligations, and who calls him in Christ into the membership of a redeemed society. When God releases man from his egoistical repressions, receives him again into communion with himself, and directs his attention to his neighbor, he makes him truly personal and truly social. Thus the Pauline formula, "justification through faith alone," which was taken up afresh by the Reformers, has become at the same time the leitmotiv of a new social ethic which tries to interpret the Christian relevance of the various kinds of social life — marriage, the state, economics, etc. — in a manner which is in closest touch with the life of the present day.

This renewed loyalty to the spirit of the Reformation does not apply only to the subject matter of this movement within continental Protestantism but also to its terminology. The thinkers of the period of the Reformation, for instance, above all those of the Lutheran line of tradition, were accustomed to speak of the family and the authority of the state as "divine orders." Thus the renewed use of this phraseology by contemporary Protestantism, in connection with social questions, means that an integral part of the Reformation doctrine which had long been forgotten and ignored has again been brought to light. Even the thought-forms of the present "theology of orders" bear witness to the fact that at the present time there is a deliberate and conscious endeavor to consider Luther and Calvin as the authentic interpreters of the gospel and its vision of human existence and social duty.

This effort to create a Protestant ethic of the orders is still in a state of great ferment, and its statements and definitions are in the highest degree controversial. Various thinkers, with mutually exclusive conceptions, are engaged

in heated conflict.[2] It must be admitted that not only are many of the present conclusions of those who are engaged in this search for a Christian "theology of the orders" being attacked, but the whole effort has been described as fundamentally a dangerous departure from the straight line of truth, and as leading the Protestant social ethic down the wrong turning. In the process of taking sides on these questions all kinds of divergences and agreements emerge on points affecting ultimate convictions which cut right across the traditional distinction between Lutheranism and Calvinism.

For reasons which have already been indicated, the question of a Christian "theology of the orders" has become a burning question; for the whole controversy concerns fundamental doctrines, as the saving revelation of God in Christ, the religious significance of nature and of historical events, the divine commandment of love and the law of nature, the sovereign grace of God and human activity, the relations between church and state, and other important questions of the Christian faith. Hence it is no easy matter to present a clear analysis of the dense network of contradictory tendencies and overlapping alternatives in this Protestant doctrine of the "orders." A brief description of some examples of the solutions which are being attempted may, by presenting us with contrasting conceptions, give us a more living and accurate impression of the tendencies of this "theology of the orders," and also of the political thought of continental Protestantism at the pres-

[2] Some of the more important documents for this discussion may be noted here for the sake of those who wish to pursue this subject further and in greater detail. Paul Althaus, *Theologie der Ordnungen;* Karl Barth, *Nein! Antwort an Emil Brunner;* Emil Brunner, *Das Gebot und die Ordnungen* (Eng. trans., *The Divine Imperative*); Emil Brunner, *Natur und Gnade;* F. Gogarten, *Politische Ethik;* H. Thielicke, *Geschichte und Existenz;* W. Wiesner, *Die Lehre von der Schöpfungsordnung.*

ent time, than might a strictly systematic analysis of the problems themselves.

A short historical survey will best open the subject of these endeavors to create a " theology of the orders," above all, those which are of Lutheran origin.

Against the medieval theory of nature and supernature the theologians of the Reformation maintained with great determination that this solution prejudiced both the unique character and the centrality of the divine salvation in Christ, as well as the truth of God's presence in the world as Creator and Preserver, by speaking of nature as an independent sphere, while at the same time it cast suspicion on the natural world and made it subordinate to priestly control. For the graduated hierarchy of nature and supernature the thinkers of the Reformation substituted the fundamental contrast between faith in God and faith in the self as two completely different attitudes.

For the previous fluctuation between an ascetic and a theocratic solution of the relations between the spiritual and the temporal power, the thinkers of the Reformation substituted their new understanding of the gospel and the ruling powers as differing agents of the divine action in this world, both of which are regarded as springing directly out of the fatherly will of the sovereign God. It has, however, been the nemesis of Lutheranism that it has confused this distinction with another alternative: the spiritual sphere of love and the temporal sphere of the law, the inner man who lives within the sphere of the freedom of grace and the outer man who lives under the conditions of the world.

The endeavor to preserve the purity of the gospel led to the separation of the temporal and the spiritual realms. The result was that usually the different attempts to reunite them only led to an oscillation between exaggerated

forms of the same errors with which the Catholic doctrine had been charged. On the one hand, the presence of God in the world as Creator was minimized or even denied; the world was conceived exclusively as a kingdom of the devil. The ethical consequences of this dualism between pure love and demonic force remained in the form of asceticism and renunciation of the world. Those who interpreted this dualism in an optimistic sense believed in the possibility of overcoming it by setting up, here and now, an earthly kingdom of love by means of human agents. Others, however, glorified the world and its institutions as a divine creation, and asserted the divinely instituted antinomy of the different spheres of human life; and from the distinction between the temporal and the spiritual spheres the final conclusion was drawn that the Christian ethos consists essentially in unconditional obedience to the secular authority and to its claims as a divine command. The dualism with which Catholicism was charged, that between two moral standards and two kinds of Christians, became in one way or another a non-dialectical dualism *within* man, between his private and his official behavior. The so-called Catholic "two-story religion" came back, by means of a detour, in the form of a "two-sphere religion."

It is this inheritance which represents the setting of the distinction made by many Lutherans between the Creator and the Preserver who works in nature and in history, and the Redeemer who works in the spiritual sphere of the church. The decisive point in our inquiry into the political ethic is that in this distinction the ethical interest is concentrated upon an emphasis upon the divine activity of the Creator in the historically given orders of human life, above all in the nation and the state. Whether this argument uses the ideas or the terminology of early Lutheranism, or of idealistic philosophy and nationalistic romanticism, is a matter of lesser importance.

Gogarten, whose writings have exerted a widespread influence upon this whole controversy, starts from an analysis of the "I-Thou" relation as the basic phenomenon of human existence. In so doing his aim is to work out a concrete anthropology and "theology of the orders" in the light of the distinctively Christian belief in God as Creator. God creates man in an indissoluble union with the "Thou." Only in his meeting with the "Thou" and in the answer to his claims does man truly become an "I." The very fact that one is a human being means dependence, response, obedience, adjustment to the claims of his neighbor. Thus the fact that human beings are so made that they are disposed for one another in mutual responsibility means something very different from an egalitarian coordination of free individuals; the relations of super- and sub-ordination are part of the ontological structure of life. Man can therefore never be understood *a se* and *per se,* since he exists only in relation to others, i.e., as father or child, husband or wife, employer or employee, etc., relations which exist apart from the choice of the individual human being.

However, these natural and organic ties which bind human beings together, and the demands which they lay upon man, acquire their particular character from the fact that in them God the Creator calls man to a total surrender in the service of his neighbor. Behind the human "thou" stands the divine "Thou."

But in this meeting with the word of God, in the claim of our neighbor for a loving response, the radical and invincible sinfulness of each human being is unveiled. Enclosed within his egoism man severs himself from his neighbor and remains literally irresponsible. Instead of serving his neighbor according to the concrete indications of the relations imposed by the existence of the orders, man in his arrogant autonomy rebels against the orders and

their Creator and threatens to destroy the actual orders themselves by trying to make them serve the purpose of his own self-glorification. Thus obedience to God and to the neighbor, which constitutes the created freedom of man, is turned into a slavery to the demonic forces of unrestrained evil.

It is the great fault of all idealistic, materialistic, liberalistic ideologies and systems that in the last resort they all, without exception, believe in the natural goodness of man. With their beautiful phrases, which extol man's freedom and his right of self-determination, they conceal his real defect, that of loss of community, and in so doing they drive him still more deeply into ruin and chaos. Because they refuse to acknowledge that the permanent order of life, which keeps the caprice and the selfish striving of man within narrow bounds, is God's creation, all that they say simply flows over the heads of actual concrete wicked men. Thus they do not know the blessing and the hidden purpose of love which lie concealed behind the fact that men are bound together within the framework of these orders.

Hence these ideologies also fail to have a right view of the necessity for the state. For Gogarten the state is the "order of creation" par excellence, which prevents the worst effects of sinful chaos from being realized, which hinders men from devouring one another like wild beasts in their self-centered renunciation of all mutual responsibility, and which by its power makes it at least possible for mankind to live together in tolerable harmony. Gogarten's "theology of the orders" culminates in this conception of sin as irresponsible rebellion against the call to community on the one hand, and of the divine necessity for the state as a supreme "ordinator" of human life on the other. Gogarten's statement that man can exist only by means of the state, and, in consequence, that ethics as a whole is

necessarily simply a political ethic,[3] can be understood only when we recall his thoroughly pessimistic view of the self-centeredness and lovelessness of man.

The theological setting for this conception of the radical sinfulness of man and of the pre-established orders as a divine creation is provided by Gogarten's doctrine of the gospel and the law. The orders are divine laws in a two-fold sense. They allure and compel self-centered man to an at least outward fulfillment of his moral obligations, which confront him when he comes into contact with his neighbor. As such they are an instrument of the divine long-suffering and providence.

In this sphere of legality the claims of the orders can be understood and fulfilled by Christians and non-Christians alike. But of greater weight than this politico-ethical observance of the divine law in the orders is its religious significance, its testimony to the wrath and the justice of God which can never be realized by man. Gogarten maintains that in this religious interpretation of the law, not as an ethical norm which is to be realized to a greater or lesser extent by means of moral effort, but as a manifestation of the wrathful, hidden God, one of the leading ideas of the Reformation has been revived.[4]

The law in its religious sense unveils man in his self-seeking and in his severance from God and his neighbor, even when all the demands of legality, or human good will,

[3] Cf., for instance, his *Politische Ethik, passim.*

[4] We may observe that Gogarten is certainly right in pointing out the paradoxical dialectic of the law and the gospel as the kernel both of the Pauline and of the Reformers' message. The whole of the struggle of the present day for a " theology of orders," as well as for the Christian attitude toward the state in particular, is ultimately concerned with this question. But it may be questioned whether the way in which Gogarten himself and several other contemporary Protestant thinkers try to grasp this dialectic, does justice to the thought of the Reformation.

of natural love and decency have been fulfilled. It shows him, in his egocentricity, that he can never fulfill the essential requirement of the law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," and thus that he is rightly exposed to the divine wrath. It is only against this dark background of the divine law in its religious sense that the marvelous nature of the divine love in Christ shines out in its full radiance. The wrath of God, the despair of man, are removed by Christ, and in the light of this saving divine fact the believer sees all these orders of the natural world, and their ethical requirements of obedience and service, as willed by the Creator, as a framework within which Christians and non-Christians can and should fulfill the will of God as the Preserver of mankind.

What, however, gives its distinctive character to this doctrine of the law and the gospel in the thought of Gogarten, and moreover makes it into a menace to this whole search for a specifically Christian ethic, comes out in the following statements, the first of which has already been implied. The divine law to which man is subject confronts him in the claim of his neighbor, that is, in the concrete imperatives of the relations between the "I" and the "Thou" within the orders; since in this sinful world the state represents the highest and the most inclusive order of creation, the divine law meets man preeminently in the claim of the political authority for responsible obedience. Second, although freed from the law in the religious sense, even the Christian remains under the law in the political and ethical sense. It is indeed the privilege of one who believes in Christ, who has been set free from the insane illusion of human self-sufficiency and from the curse of the divine wrath, that he may submit to the legal ordinances of the earthly authorities in willing service. In this unceasing obedience and in this adjustment to the claims of authority

he serves his neighbor best, since he does not resist the concrete social demands which bind him to the "Thou" in the name of any so-called "Christian" ideals and norms or in a spirit of criticism, but willingly respects the hidden ordering of God, which, he believes, these orders contain. Precisely when the Christian in all humility takes his place within the orders of society, and in a very concrete and practical way fulfills his various duties as they arise naturally in the course of his profession or calling, does he prove the reality of his faith in Christ.

There is no need to go further to prove that thought of this kind does not leave much room for a specifically Christian ethos. Of recent years Gogarten has modified his views to this extent, that he now conceives the people (*Volk*) and not the state as the real "order of creation"; it is the duty of the state to see that the purity of the people and its stability are not injured or disturbed. This the state must do as the supreme political authority.[5] At the same time he denies still more sharply and vigorously the possibility of a Christian ethos whose content could differ from that of the morality of the people (*Volk*). The eternal will of the Creator, as a preserving and ordering will in the midst of the disintegration of human sin, is manifested in the people (*Volk*) in the complex of natural and moral ties of organic community and powerful authority, of service and willing obedience, which constitutes the national environment of man.

The national ethos, the national standards, customs and traditions are equally binding on Christians and non-Christians. For Gogarten, therefore, the one and only social task of the Christian message is that it should proclaim these obligations as the will of the Creator. For only in

[5] Cf. *Einheit von Evangelium und Volkstum?* and *Ist Volksgesetz Gottesgesetz?*

disciplined obedience to the orders is human life preserved from destruction and the concrete love of our neighbor made possible. And it is only the proclamation of this *Volksnomos* as a divine imperative which opens the ears of men to the message of the gospel. "For the gospel can only reveal its meaning where man is placed under the most austere law." [6]

In various ways the general theological position of which Gogarten provides an outstanding example is adopted by several Lutherans of the present day. One of these Lutherans, indeed, describes it as a fundamental doctrine of the Lutheran Reformation that the ethical attitude of the Christian is summed up completely in the natural orders, according to the rules of their "immanent rationality," which is not invalidated by God's saving will in Christ but has rather been confirmed thereby.[7]

Emanuel Hirsch, a leading theologian among the German Christians, has tried — with a personal feeling and literary ability which practically excel those of all the other contemporary Lutheran thinkers — to combine the life of man in its natural social forms with the Christian faith.[8]

Although in many directions Hirsch takes a line different from that adopted by the Lutheran group which has just been mentioned and is strongly influenced above all by German idealism, he also, in the attempt to answer this question, makes the Lutheran doctrine of the law and the gospel and the two realms his starting point. With this he combines a religious and ethical philosophy of history whose central motif is the belief in God as the "Lord of History." That God is Lord of History means that the

[6] *Einheit von Evangelium und Gesetz?* p. 21.

[7] Elert, *Bekenntnis, Blut und Boden,* pp. 46, 33, *et passim.*

[8] Cf. his books, *Die gegenwärtige geistige Lage; Deutsches Volkstum und evangelischer Glaube; Christliche Freiheit und politische Bindung.*

whole of earthly existence within which man is set is created, supported and pervaded by God. And this creative presence and self-revelation of God in the dynamic course of history is not something general and abstract, but must be understood in an absolutely concrete manner. The actual presence of the Creator is manifested in the claims of human life which transcend the individual altogether, demands on man which release his deepest instincts for love and joyful self-devotion and summon him to discipline and self-denying obedience. Above all, the nations are the instruments of the Lord of History and the concrete embodiments of his will. In their growth and in their decline, in their honor and in their victory, in their fidelity to their own divine commission, the religious depth and the divine significance of history becomes visible. The nation (*Volk*) is the "hidden sovereign" of all human life, the moving force and the norm of all human activity, the one all-pervading and all-inclusive entity. All the other orders and activities of man, such as the state, the family, the economic order, culture and international relations, must be conceived and estimated from the point of view of the nation. This is the general argument which determines Hirsch's interpretation of human order and of Christian behavior. And on this point Hirsch is only a particularly eloquent and brilliant exponent of a conviction which has exercised a great and enduring influence upon the whole thought of German Lutheranism.

Now the great question with which Hirsch is faced is this: Is the Lord of History — of whom man, when he boldly steps into the stream of history, is in some dim way aware — the same God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? The Creator and Preserver who as a condition of historical existence demands thoroughgoing compulsion, harshness and self-assertion in fighting even to the point of

death — is he the same God who in Christ summons us to a life of love and freedom? Hirsch does not ignore the extreme tension which these questions hold. But he replies: "The Protestant Christian belongs to the one and the same God, both when he hears the call of God in the gospel, and when he hears the call of the 'Lord of History' in the great and sacred storm of national events. The meeting with God in national existence and in history is the only preparation for meeting with God in the gospel." [9]

Thus the message of God's self-sacrificing love, which breaks into history from the world beyond, is not a radical antithesis to human life within history. Rather it confirms and blesses that which the Creator makes known to man in the mysterious course of history. The release from the law of egocentricity which the word of forgiveness effects does not on that account mean a release from the demands of history. It is the special privilege of the Christian that while rooted in the transcendent sphere of eternity and turned toward his neighbor in selfless love he can serve the earthly community with a resolution and a total surrender possible to no one else. He does not seek to master the course of history by so-called "Christian" norms; he does not stand aside as an indifferent spectator; with gratitude he knows that his position in society, and the duties which it brings, is the place which God has preordained as his place of service. In joyful obedience he adapts himself to the divine order of creation, to the people (*Volk*), and works hard to insure that the call of the Creator to disciplined and settled order, to the strengthening of natural ties, to the purity of the nation (*Volk*) and the realization of its historical commission shall be heard. Unconditional fellowship with God imposes on the Christian the unconditional obligation to be utterly faithful to the earthly life,

[9] *Deutsches Volkstum und evangelischer Glaube,* p. 39.

with all the social obligations which it involves. "Fidelity to the Lord becomes the sanctification of fidelity to the blood and the people [*Volk*] or nation." [10]

In Hirsch's view this attitude toward the world expresses the distinctive character of the Lutheran view of life. The Lutheran Christian sees the fleeting and contingent character, the finitude, and indeed the profound distress and torment of the earthly reality and its tasks; he sees how utterly remote they are from the kingdom of God. But with his heart rooted in this spiritual kingdom, and thus released from the bondage of being obliged to seek his own salvation, he is free to give himself up wholly to the claims of the earthly powers — actually, to Hirsch this means the claims of the nation and the state — trusting that here he is met by the Lord of History. Thus the answer given by Hirsch, and by those who agree with him, might well be summed up in his own words: "This Lutheran view of life makes it possible to regard the national political order as hallowed by God, that is, as given, supported and required by him, made by him the source of creative activity and absolute duty, and yet at the same time to regard it quite clearly and plainly as a mundane and transitory matter." [11]

The Barthian theology gives an entirely different answer to this question of a Christian "theology of the orders." As the Barthian theology itself — so far as its historical genesis is concerned — developed as a powerful movement of protest against every form of Christianity which gives to man and his world an independent value apart from God, let us first of all listen to its protest against the attempts which have just been mentioned to give a religious interpretation of the life of man in society. All these and similar attempts deny the universal sovereignty

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

[11] Hirsch, *Christliche Freiheit und politische Bindung*, p. 40.

of God and the radical sinfulness of the world of man. Although they profess the religious principles of the Reformation they constantly fall into the errors of the Roman Catholic separation between nature and supernature, and ascribe to the man who has not been born again a knowledge of what is or is not in agreement with the law of God which he does not possess. The irrational national law, which Hirsch declares to be the will of God, and other theories of the order of creation, are not radically opposed to the rational natural law of Roman Catholicism, as their protagonists think they are; they are only different solutions of the same false dilemma. For these theories are all attempts to answer the question: In the Christian ethic how can we strike a right balance between creation and redemption, between nature and grace, reason and faith? But what makes this dilemma so dangerous is the assumption which lies behind it: that reason and the natural world may be conceived, more or less, as an independent entity which receives a Christian sanction. Barth and his followers are entirely opposed to this coordination of a supposedly independent creation with the word of God in Christ of salvation and judgment. The religious aspirations and moral efforts of men, or certain forms of man's social and political life, are in no way a preparation for, nor can they manifest an affinity with, the sovereign and free grace of God. Indeed, such a way of thinking only confirms man in his rebellious self-sufficiency and gives him a self-made world where he can evade the sting of the divine word.

When national solidarity, political obedience, the development of personality, or any other intra-mundane ideal is conceived as the concrete content of the divine will, the subordination of all human life to the actual command-

ments of God is destroyed. The law of God is severed from the saving word in Christ, and its concrete content is identified with definite human claims. The national gospel comes under the same condemnation as the social gospel insofar as in it interest is concentrated upon efforts and problems which concern this world alone and upon the contribution which Christianity can make toward their solution, and not on the divine word and its message of judgment and grace to fallen man. When the emphasis is laid upon evanescent, historically relative factors, men have forgotten that this earth, with all that belongs to it, must be regarded from the eschatological point of view. The emphasis must be removed from man and his world to God as judge and redeemer, and to his coming kingdom. From this point of view the whole process of history becomes absolutely relative. It becomes evident that all human aspirations and activities, all historical events, all organizations of human relations without exception come under the law of nothingness and rebellion against God.

This charge of diminishing the sovereignty of God is directed not only against every attempt to deal with the problem of the Christian ethic on the basis of an ontological or philosophical theory of human existence which can then afterwards — in some way or another — be combined with the gospel. It is also leveled against the distinction — common in modern Lutheranism — between the spiritual and the temporal spheres, insofar as it implies that the dominion of Christ is restricted to the inner world of men's hearts and that the organization of human affairs is left to the control of practical necessity. This solution, too, denies the radical sinfulness of the world, which also pervades the social life of man; it limits in an arbitrary manner the totalitarian claim of the divine will over all spheres of human

life. The fact that it declares that the saving operation of God in Christ has no direct reference to life in society erects selfmade barriers to the universal claim of God.

It would, however, be a complete misunderstanding of this view if we were to conclude from its ardent protest that its attitude toward the questions of the Christian ethos is purely negative. On the contrary. But its concern for the sovereignty of God's word leads it to radical abolition of all kinds of interpretations of the Christian ethos which try to coordinate this solely valid center with other principles.

There is only one starting point and one center for the Christian ethos: the God who reveals himself only in Christ as Creator, Preserver and Redeemer. But this does not mean that God leaves the fallen world outside Christ to itself and its own ideas of law. Faith in the sovereign God includes confidence in the mighty working of providence, which, in spite of all human and superhuman rebellion, leads world history toward its eschatological end. In his long-suffering God preserves this world — which is so deeply entangled in sin and so far gone in apostasy — in Christ and for Christ. In the midst of all the disorder and the chaos of the world faith holds firmly to the fact that God is and remains One who in hiddenness and secrecy orders all that happens. The central motif and the distinctive character of the Christian ethos consist in witnessing to his honor and glory in the paradoxical garment of human sinfulness. And this unconditional obedience to the divine claim to absolute sovereignty is the only basis and boundary of all earthly fidelity.

What, then, does this active obedience to the will of the One who orders all things actually mean in concrete terms? The dynamic conception of the free operation of the "ordinator," who summons men to obedience in the perpetual change of historical situations and callings, excludes pre-

conceived opinions and ethical systems. It rules out every kind of Christian world-view or any kind of established scale of values according to which historical events and human institutions could be judged. With great energy it is maintained that the Holy Scriptures form the only source of knowledge for Christian thought and conduct. Their revelation of the will of God, exemplified in the Ten Commandments, in the Sermon on the Mount, in the apostolic exhortations, and so forth, constitutes the guiding principle of Christian conduct and no immanent principles or any personifications of the ordinances of the world. What the divine order means in the family, the state and society, understood in the sense of a personal concrete call, here and now, can be known and affirmed only in an obedient listening to the Scriptures, under the leading of the Holy Spirit.

It is therefore only in the Christian community that the divine word of judgment and of grace, and its concrete instructions, is perceived in joyful thankfulness and penitent obedience. It is within the Christian community, among sinners who are waiting for the coming kingdom of God, that God himself, in wonderful grace, gives the fulfillment of his commandments through Christ. The man who has not been born again does not know the law of God, nor does he obey it. But this fact of rebellion against God, which constitutes the basic character of the world, does not remove one jot or tittle from the totalitarian claim of the divine lawgiver; God remains Lord over the whole world. For this reason, therefore, the church is under the obligation to testify boldly to the whole world to her faith in God as her Lord who is at the same time Creator, Judge and Redeemer, and in the midst of an unbelieving world to erect the signs of his majesty. "The church would not be the church," says Karl Barth in a characteristic passage, "if

not merely in her existence, but also in her doctrine and in her attitude, the law of God, his commandments, his questions, his exhortations, his accusations were not also visible and tangible for the world, for the state and for society, unless its message of the grace of the Triune God . . . were, as such, a prophetic witness to the will of God, against all sinful arrogance and against all the lawlessness and injustice of man." [12]

Finally, we must indicate a third method of approach to our present subject. The tendency which was first mentioned resulted in a social ethic which combined the Christian message, in one way or another, with other principles and in consequence diminished either its uniqueness or its universality. The second theory proclaimed the exclusive revelation of God in Christ, but appeared to deny the legitimacy of a Christian ethic of the orders. To carry this somewhat schematic division a little further, let us now indicate a third tendency which also takes God's self-revelation in Christ as its starting point, but from that very point of view maintains that it is able to develop a specifically Christian interpretation of social institutions.[13] Some indications of the general line of argument may throw some further light

[12] "Evangelium und Gesetz," *Theologische Existenz Heute,* No. 32, p. 11.

[13] We must, however, add that the Christocentric ethic of the life of the orders often slips into the view which was mentioned first of all — the view of the two poles — which regards the common life of man as a more or less self-contained order of creation (or natural order) governed by its own principles, which it tries to combine with the "order of redemption" of the church. This recurring inconsequence is perhaps most strikingly expressed in the actual conception of church and state and their mutual relations. Even among the representatives of this group there is a tendency from time to time to allow phrases like "the self-preservation of the state" and "realization of the historical mission of the nation" and similar formulas to be conceived as independent ethical principles which do not affect the Christian ethic but have to be taken simply as an indisputable norm of creation.

upon the complicated network of assumptions which determine political thought within continental Protestantism at the present day.

The starting point of this conception is suggested in the following words of Brunner: "We can only rightly understand the God-given orders which make life possible even for the heathen (although he perceives their origin and their meaning only very indistinctly) through Jesus or the Holy Scriptures, as divine orders and therefore as God's rules for our behavior in society."[14] God's reconciliation with man in Christ is the only center of all Christian life and truth. But from this center new light streams forth upon the darkness of the fallen world which unveils its hidden meaning.

It is an inalienable part of the Christian faith that the God who reveals his redeeming love in Christ is always and everywhere at work as the almighty Creator who is unceasingly creating something new in history and in the world in spite of its rebellion against him, who in spite of its disorder and its hostility does not let the world fall into decay but graciously preserves it for his purpose of redemption. New light also falls upon the ordered structure of human life in the family, commercial life, the state, etc. These orders must be understood not as forming an ethically neutral framework of personal life but as agents of a definite divine purpose. They are instruments by means of which God re-creates the life of humanity and preserves it for its meeting with Christ. Since these orders erect objective barriers against human caprice and self-seeking, and provide concrete opportunities for community and the service of one's neighbor, they form an excellent means for the educative love of God. The family, the nation, the state, etc., "are not merely particular spheres of human life,

[14] *Natur und Gnade,* p. 6, n. 1.

within which we are to act, but 'orders' *in accordance with* which we have to act, because in them — even if only in a fragmentary and indirect way — God's will meets us." [15] In them a divine gift and a divine imperative meet man.

These words of Brunner point to the obvious fact that the existing orders are in no way identical with the divine intention for them. The forces of evil are not only operative in the hearts and the motives of man, but are also interwoven with all social institutions. Human sinfulness and superhuman evil have become crystallized in the ordered relations among human beings and have destroyed their divine meaning. All Christian life, therefore, means the life of a redeemed sinner in an ambiguous and demonic environment, where even the purest motives have sinful effects and where only the certainty of divine forgiveness can give joyfulness for aggressive action. But this certainty of forgiveness, in which the Christian boldly regards his calling as a divine vocation, does not imply a quietistic acceptance of the existing situation. It is impossible to combine the Christian ethos with any unreserved fidelity to any earthly authority, with any uncritical acceptance of existing conditions. In the complexity of social life, where the creative activity of God is always entangled with evil, faith is assigned an extremely diacritical and selective function.

What is the standard for the Christian judgment on society? It is the divine meaning of the orders, "as it discloses itself in listening to the word of God concerning man and the world." [16] Thence comes the possibility of a concrete ethic of the social order which illuminates the constant flow of the common life, its institutions and its move-

[15] Brunner, *Das Gebot und die Ordnungen,* p. 275.
[16] Althaus, *Theologie der Ordnungen,* p. 31.

ments in the light of the ordering will of God.[17] From this point of view, then, it becomes possible to distinguish between that which is relatively better or worse in political and economic organization, in the moral and cultural life of society. From this point of view, too, it is the privilege and the duty of Christians — as instruments of God for the realization of his sovereign love — to work for a constant transformation of human institutions, in the sense of bringing all into closer conformity with his divine will. Personal sanctification cannot be severed from the "hallowing of the orders"; there must be an unbroken struggle against the concrete demonic forces in political, social and international life.

This does not mean, however, a moralistic perfectionism or the setting up of the kingdom of God on earth by human effort. God himself is the sole Lord of this conflict. And so long as history shall last the forces of evil will offer embittered resistance and will try to recapture the spheres of individual and social life. The fight will rage with peculiar intensity wherever Christian faith and Christian vocation have introduced a purifying and sanctifying influence. Thus the Christian life within the framework of the orders remains filled with eschatological tension and points beyond itself to a new heaven and a new earth which God himself will create in his own time.

This third conception also implies that the true meaning of human social life will only be disclosed in the light of Christ. Only he "whose eyes have been opened by Christ"[18] can believe — against all the empirical reality of immeasurable suffering, hatred and injustice — that

17 The most thorough attempt down to the present time to erect a modern social ethic upon these general premises is Professor Emil Brunner's comprehensive work, *Das Gebot und die Ordnungen* (Eng. trans., *The Divine Imperative*).

18 Brunner, *Natur und Gnade,* p. 14.

God realizes his ordering love in and through human agents and institutions. The man who has never been born again remains in rebellion against God; his eyes are blind to the will of God and he sees only that which affects his own welfare, even when he directs his gaze toward heaven. To use Luther's expressive phrase, man is "huddled up within himself," and he can be converted to true humanity and community only by an act of sovereign grace. We here see the anthropology of the Reformation with its severe judgment on man.

But does this conception mean that all human insight, all human efforts, apart from Christ are included in one sweeping condemnation as radically opposed to God? Does it mean that the natural man has no insight into the right order of things, and that whether he works for peace or war, for social justice or selfish gain, for better family life or moral corruption, is a matter of indifference to God? This question is answered in the following way.

The mysterious fact of the selfish rebellion of man against his Creator (which is the heart of all sin) with its poisonous effects upon human character and upon relations between human beings has in point of fact drawn man wholly away from God. Therefore it is impossible to speak of the relation between natural man and God in terms of gradualness and continuity. But the fact that the human knowledge of the will of God is perverted does not mean that it has been entirely destroyed; in however fragmentary and ambiguous a manner, the law of God is written upon the heart of man in indelible characters. The hidden God manifests himself to man in his religious idols and in his moral ideals, in his feeling for justice, in his capacity for statesmanship and the shaping of culture; thus, whether man is aware of it or not, God uses him to serve his own ends. Therefore it is also possible to speak of an external

realization of the ordering will of God even among non-Christians, even in the sphere of religious revolt against God. For this reason, over wide stretches of human life there can prevail an agreement between the Christian and the non-Christian ethos, even though in their central motives and their final aims they are totally different. It is this external approximation in the field of discontinuity of which Brunner is thinking, for instance, when he says that God's order of creation in marriage "can also to some extent be realized by those who do not know the God who is revealed in Christ." [19]

Thus this current of Protestant social thinking has a peculiar dialectical attitude toward the natural man and his efforts for social and political transformation. It maintains that the non-Christian world does not know the real meaning of all human institutions which has been revealed in Christ, and therefore that it always distorts it. But being aware of God's hidden working within all human efforts and movements, it does not lose sight of the elements of truth and the relative approximation to the will of God which these movements contain. The Christian message about the orders does not refer only to believers; since it witnesses to the ordering will of God it gives guidance, warning and encouragement to the whole world, whether the latter recognizes or ignores it. But this guidance in moral, social and political matters is not severed from the central message of the gospel. Ruthlessly it lays bare the sinful heart which lies behind the highest form of culture and behind the most ardent service to one's nation or people; it is a summons to repentance and change of mind. It proclaims that outward conformity to the ordering intentions of God does not save man from his alienation from God, but points to the true conformity to the will

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

of the One who creates the orders which is given in Christ's forgiveness of our sins.

The individual issues which this third approach to the problem of the social order includes cannot be expounded here. Our attention must, however, be directed to an important distinction which is far more than a terminological subtlety and which in point of fact works out in two completely different doctrines of the state. While some of the thinkers of this group regard all the different institutions of social life as "orders of creation," or sometimes as "orders for preservation," others lay the greatest emphasis upon the sharpest distinction between, on the one hand, the family, the people, art, culture, and so on, as rightly belonging to God's created order, and, on the other hand, the state and the law as belonging to the order of preservation. The nerve of this distinction is the statement that whereas marriage, for instance, is directly rooted in the intention of the Creator, the state can only be understood as existing upon the basis of sin as an indispensable but negative instrument of the divine preservation of the world against the disruptive forces of evil. The far-reaching consequences of this distinction will become clear in the chapter which deals with the Calvinistic doctrine of the state.

VIII

LUTHERANISM AND THE STATE

SINCE THE end of the war in 1918, continental Lutheranism has been wrestling with the problem of church and state with a vigor greater, possibly, than it had ever exercised during the whole course of its existence. During the last year or two in particular and (for obvious reasons) especially in Germany the question of the state and the nation (*Volk*), and the Christian significance of these institutions, has been studied and discussed with still greater earnestness. A whole mass of publications of all kinds — books and pamphlets and articles — as well as public statements by ecclesiastical bodies, show how serious and prolonged is this process of searching for a new understanding of the church, the nation (or the people) and the state. Some preliminary observations, however, will show that it is far from easy to give a comprehensive survey of the prevailing characteristics of this process.

In spite of the fact that all schools of thought make a common appeal to the principles of the Lutheran Reformation, there is *no* consensus on the question of what actually constitutes the genuine Lutheran conception of the state. The preceding chapter has shown us what divergences of opinion already exist in the sphere of ultimate convictions. We do not need much imagination to perceive that the conceptions of the ordering of human life which will be held by a Lutheran of the " German Christian " group (like Hirsch for instance), on the one hand, and by a Barthian Lutheran on the other, must inevitably work out in completely differ-

ent views of the state. Hence the conflicting doctrines of church and state are not merely variations of one common fundamental theme, nor can they be explained simply as a difference of emphasis. Such a simplification of the controversy would never do justice to this tragic situation which compels each side — on conscientious grounds — to reproach the other, saying: "Your spirit is utterly different from ours! We have neither part nor lot with you!"

So far as German Lutheranism is concerned, not for one moment must we forget the special background of this controversy — which explains its existential character and many of its peculiar features — namely, the whole impact of the National Socialist regime. The reflex effects of this sweeping revolution even upon the church, on its witness, its organization, and its possibilities of influencing public life in the Christian direction, are well known.[1] This wholly changed situation has forced the German churches to rethink the question of their relation to the state as well as that of the Christian's duty in political life. And in this process of reorientation the desire to relate the message and the life of the church to the new situation has produced — especially on the side of Lutheranism — new tendencies and theories which, at least in part, appear to be simply a theological superstructure based on a political and racial ideology. The Christian conception of the task and the limits of the state, especially in its relation to the church, has therefore become a greater field of controversy within German Lutheranism than ever before. Lutheranism, however, is not a peculiarly German form of Christianity. In Scandinavian Lutheranism, for instance, we find a piety, a theology and an empirical relation between church and state which in many respects represent a distinctive type

[1] Cf. Keller's description in *Church and State on the European Continent.*

and for that very reason throw new light upon the political ethic of Lutheranism. Unfortunately, however, the distinctive position of Scandinavian Lutheranism has never been adequately stated or described.

A further element in this situation — and one which makes the ecumenical understanding and estimate of the Lutheran position more difficult — is the following fact, which is more than a methodological peculiarity. In much recent Lutheran literature it is constantly asserted that there is no general and universal Christian opinion on political matters; Christian reflection on the question of the state is legitimate only in reference to a particular moment and a concrete national and political situation. The following statement of a representative neo-Lutheran may serve to illustrate this point: " The Christian message concerning the state always refers to the concrete actual situation of a particular state at a particular time. From the theological point of view we speak rightly about the state at the present day only when we start, not from an abstract conception of the state, but from the concrete reality of the German national state [*Volksstaat*] as a historical fact of our present experience." [2] Behind this methodological thesis there lies a peculiar theory of history, a profound conviction of the distinctive and incommensurable character of the historically contingent situations as given by the Creator — a feature of the thought of continental neo-Protestantism which is particularly prominent in German Lutheranism. The evident advantages of this theory are realism and concreteness; the equally evident danger is that ethical reflection on the particular situation will rest satisfied with a more or less phenomenological description inserted into a theological frame of reference and then hallowed by a Christian sanction. For this reason other Lu-

2 Althaus, *Kirche und Staat nach Lutherischer Lehre,* p. 7.

therans lay more emphasis upon the fact that the Christian message contains a revelation of the will of God for the political order which is of universal and abiding relevance. It is obvious that this proclamation of the religious significance of the state must be reformulated in every generation and made concrete with the aid of the best Christian thought of the time; but in its essential content it is not affected by particular situations. It provides binding standards and criteria for every kind of Christian judgment on and attitude toward political questions. Thus the national and political factors which distinguish Christians and churches from one another are not to be regarded as irrelevant, yet on the other hand they are wholly subordinate to the supra-national and ecumenical community.

These preliminary observations have shown that the Lutheran doctrine of the state does not present any uniform body of thought, but that, on the contrary, at the present moment it is in a condition of great ferment and conflict. It is true of course, as we have already noted, that the appeal to the Lutheran Reformation and its confessional statements, and the use of Lutheran forms of thought, give a certain common framework to the controversy. And further, at least to a certain extent it would be possible to write a description of the general tendencies of Lutheran political thought from an external point of view by suggesting the conceptions of the state from which it differs. But every representation of its content would immediately confirm the statement that in point of fact, even in respect of the problems of the political ethic, many different attitudes exist all of which claim to be " Lutheran."

How does contemporary Lutheranism conceive the divine sanction and the significance of the state in human life? Instead of analyzing the particular conflicting currents of thought in detail, it will be better for our purpose

to try to give a kind of mosaic both of the general temper and of some of the chief issues; only at some important points will we deal with the existing differences of opinion in detail.

Some recent attempts of two representatives of the neo-Lutheran "middle way" will serve to bring out clearly the general direction of Lutheran thought. Althaus, in his explanation of the political ethos, says that both that view of politics which ignores ethics altogether and that view of ethics which is wholly nonpolitical should be regarded as a Scylla and Charybdis which must at all costs be avoided.[3] In different ways both give a wrong idea of the relation between religion and politics. The Lutheran conception does not place the political life outside moral sanctions, in the form of a separation between personal piety and an uncritical submission to the demands of a state which ignores the claims of morality. It does not in any way sanction a Machiavellian policy of domination. "There is a brand of political autonomy which is not of God but of the devil. . . . At every step, therefore, politics which is related to the will of God must resist this demonic autonomy, and will have to fight against those who have fallen under its sway."

But there is a negative element of truth in this moral skepticism in the political sphere, namely, that the ethical obligations of political life cannot be laid down and fixed once for all in a universally applicable system. These obligations vary with changing concrete situations and personal responsibilities. The purely ethical point of view, on the other hand, which ignores politics altogether and tests everything by its own abstract standards distorts the statement of the problem. Those who hold this view for-

[3] Cf. *Grundriss der Ethik,* p. 104, and his article, "Politik und Moral," in the encyclopedia *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (2nd ed.).

get that one's ethical position is necessarily different in strictly personal relations and in the objective relations of groups. In its Christian form it often isolates a partial truth — like the Sermon on the Mount, for instance — from the context of the Christian revelation as a whole, and gives it an absolute and legalistic interpretation. It then proclaims this code of Christian principles as a norm which can be applied to the world as a whole. Others, again, are content to believe that this principle can be applied only in private life and in the purely personal sphere. Inevitably this idea suggests that politics is fundamentally non-Christian and should at all costs be avoided. The Christian ethic must therefore find a way between these two extremes of an ethical view which misinterprets the peculiar dynamic of the political sphere, and a view of politics which ignores the claims of morality.

The argument has of course a much wider reference than Lutheranism. But we can approach the Lutheran position more closely if we delimit and define our subject in greater detail. Wendland maintains that the various conflicting views on this subject within contemporary German Protestantism do converge at one point — and this in a very significant manner — namely, in their common rejection of the following conceptions of the state (an assumption which would apply *a fortiori* to Lutheranism): the anarchist theory with its radical negation of the state; utopian humanism, according to which in a future stage of human history the state will no longer be necessary, since it will have been rendered superfluous by a society based upon perfect reason and justice; a conservative romanticism which believes in a "Christian state" and misinterprets the strictly temporal character of the political order and its distinction from the kingdom of God; the Catholic state doctrine with its premises of natural law and its sub-

ordination of the state to the church; and, finally, the secular view of the state, which either turns the state into an idol or depreciates it as a merely "auxiliary apparatus of society." [4]

Now, what are the positive presuppositions for this point of view? All the currents of contemporary Lutheran thought — and at this central point they are in agreement with other Christian bodies — are agreed that the state is a divine institution with special authority in the communal life of man. But in more concrete terms, what is the significance and the character of this institution? The answer must be sought in the searchlight of the Christian faith as a whole. Following a familiar line of argument, Lutheran thinkers try to answer this question by asking what the fundamental statements of the Christian creed — God's creative and ordering operation in all human life; the mysterious destructive power of evil, which separates man from God and from his neighbor; the redeeming presence of God in Christ and his kingdom — imply for the meaning of the state and of man's attitude toward the state?

As the preceding chapter has already shown, it is our understanding of these objects of ultimate belief, in their distinction and in their conjunction, which in every case determines the perspective and the content of the political ethic. Beneath the variety of overlapping interpretations we may distinguish two main positions. Many Lutherans regard the state as an "order of creation." Like the other social forms of life which form part and parcel of man's equipment, the state with its authoritative exercise of power and of law is a manifestation of the will of God as Creator. Like them, perverted by human arrogance and self-sufficiency, in all its empirical forms it is a *corpus mixtum*

[4] Cf. his *Das Staatsproblem in der deutschen Theologie der Gegenwart*, p. 5.

of good and evil whose true function can be realized only under the influence of Christ. Others regard the state mainly as an "order of preservation," its peculiar sanction lying in the fact that it has been instituted by God as a dam which prevents the inrush of the destructive effects of evil in the social sphere. It is thus regarded as an "emergency order," which only prevents complete chaos by its exercise of compulsion and force. The state therefore stands in a peculiar position, in which it differs from the other forms of social life: its compulsive and its preserving function is imperative for this sinful era, and, indeed, it cannot be avoided; but it is mainly negative in character.

The general Lutheran view of the state at the present time regards the impulse which leads to the formation of the state as an integral part of the equipment of man, given by the Creator. The state is based upon the social nature of man; it is the product of the will to community. It is a social objectification of the impulse to order which is inherent in all the activities and institutions of human life.

> Even the state is primarily a peculiar way of being united to one another in an order. Thus it is based upon the divine creation and belongs at the same time to the idea of man. The impulse and the ability to create states is inherent in human nature, that is, in the fact that man has been created as man. . . . Man cannot exist apart from the state. That is the meaning of the ancient statement that man is a "political animal." [5]

The state is the institution which orders the life of man in community. That which gives its peculiar quality to the ordering activity of the state, however, is the fact that it reflects the power and the justice of the Creator; it is this which constitutes the dignity and the immense responsibility of all political government. Thus the complex instinct of authority and obedience deeply rooted in the so-

[5] Wendland, *Die Nation vor Gott,* pp. 180–81.

ciality of man is in itself not an effect produced by evil but is a gift of the Creator. In the Lutheran tradition one frequently hears it said that the state is an instrument of the fatherly rule of God.

Political authority, therefore, has an organic relation with the various different associations in which the social tendency of man is fulfilled. It does not approach the other social institutions from the outside as an entirely foreign power. Thus the assertion that the state is based upon the rule of God as Creator means not only that every claim of the state to be a "mortal god" is disallowed, but also that its activity is connected with the various forms of social life. And since social life as a whole is involved in an unceasing process of dynamic change, it is likewise natural that the forms, institutions and obligations of political life should change with the changes in the historical process and should be constantly readjusting themselves to fresh expressions of social life.

It is characteristic of a large section of Lutheranism, especially in Germany, that it interprets this intimate relation between the political order and human society as a whole as a divine sanction of the national state (*Volksstaat*). In a passage in which Althaus is trying to argue that the fact that this view goes beyond the traditional Lutheran conception of the state as authority (*Obrigkeit*) is necessitated by the changed historical situation, he expresses this idea in the following illuminating form:

> The state is the state of our own people (or nation), not only destined for it, but in its actual form born out of the very character of the people, ministering not only to the peace, but also to the self-knowledge and the development of the nation [*Volk*] in its own distinctive life. Its dignity is not only that of the order of law, as such, but it is also that of the history, the life and the vocation of this nation [*Volk*]. It demands and effects not only obedience to the law, but love, a heartfelt

devotion to the life which supports us and has been entrusted to us, to the inheritance of our fathers and the life of our children. Thus the political sphere fills and claims man as a whole.[6]

We will return to this point later.

Thus the state is conceived as based upon the good divine creation. But only discursive reflection in the light of faith can distinguish this aspect of political life from the fact that in manifold ways the state testifies to the truth that man has fallen away from his Creator. Lutheran thinkers lay stress on the fact — though with varying degrees of emphasis — that the state has a particular connection with the diabolical realities of life. Gogarten says decidedly, "Where evil is ignored it is impossible to know anything about the basis of the state and its majesty."[7] These words are inspired by the message of the Reformation concerning the horrifying depths of evil in the world. Man's secret longing to be his own God, his loveless desire for self-affirmation, pours forth from his heart and irresistibly permeates both his personal and his corporate life. Not only is man opposed to man in a state of permanent conflict, but the ruthless struggle for life and death between social institutions and collective interests is evident manifestation that this world "lieth in the evil one." Apart from this realistic view the religious significance of the state cannot be fully grasped. In a chaotic world, where community, love and service are always mingled with their opposites, where the highest culture and the noblest endeavors continually reveal the *hybris* of the individual and the collective ego, the political order is entrusted with the unique task of protecting humanity from self-destruction. To quote once more from the writings of two thinkers

[6] *Die deutsche Stunde der Kirche,* p. 28.
[7] *Politische Ethik,* p. 210.

whose contributions have had a great influence upon the modern Lutheran theology of the state:

> The state is that order by means of which man tries to secure his position against the forces of chaos and destruction which menace his existence within the world, and indeed, against the destructive forces which issue from his own nature.[8]
>
> The state, that is, government in the form of law, according to Lutheran doctrine, although everywhere established and administered by man, is a divine order by means of which in a world of sin and conflict God preserves humanity from falling into chaos and makes life in community possible.[9]

Hence it would be inadequate, and indeed misleading, to consider the state solely as an institution which coordinates and furthers human interests and human activities, or even as the concrete social form of the will to community. The lack of fellowship and good will, and still more, the absolutely demonic will to self-sufficiency, conflict, dominion at others' cost, gives the state the quality of a protective wall or a strait jacket. Since it checks the worst effects of social evil, it is a divine antidote to the menacing catastrophe of social disintegration. The positive task, namely, the furtherance of genuinely social tendencies and efforts, is therefore inseparable from the repressive task of the resistance of antisocial forces. And in face of this immense opposition to community and harmonious cooperation which is raging within society the political authority is forced to assume the form of compulsory authority in order somehow to be able to fulfill its task aright. In this empirical world the *ultima ratio* of the sword is a tragic but unavoidable necessity for the preservation of law and order.

In the light of these considerations the derivation of the

[8] Gogarten, *Politische Ethik,* p. 58.

[9] Althaus, *Die Kirche und das Staatsproblem in der Gegenwart,* p. 6.

state from the fatherly rule of God (which has already been mentioned) stands out still more clearly. The harshness and suffering, the insoluble dilemmas and tragic conflicts of conscience which all political life involves, constitute a reminder, which cannot be ignored, of the " fallen " state of mankind. With a humble sense of his own weakness and sinfulness the Christian cannot help seeing the chastising hand of God in the compulsory administration of law and the maintenance of order in public life. In the sword of compulsion he sees a divine instrument of vengeance wielded against man for his transgression of the divine will. But this is not the final word. The fact that God does not abandon humanity to its attempts at self-destruction but makes a certain measure of peace and order possible through the existence of the state is certainly a token of his long-suffering and his mercy. Behind the mask of political government the fatherly goodness of God is at work.

> The existence of the state is based upon the love and the justice of God, and on the conscious or unconscious faith of human beings (that is, in the numinous power behind the state), even when they only submit with reluctance to the authority of the state. For the Christian, however, this belief in a power behind the state becomes gratitude to God for the fact that the state thus becomes a " means of grace," by protecting the Word and the Sacraments, and by furthering the genuine exercise of one's vocation.[10]

These words of a Swedish Lutheran, which suggest a very close relation between the political order and the constitutive functions of the church as these are conceived in the Lutheran doctrine, indicate the ultimate sanction of the state, namely, that its function of preserving order in human society is not an end in itself, but takes place in the light of Christ. But before we study this question in closer

[10] Runestam, *Die Kirche und das Staatsproblem in der Gegenwart*, p. 117.

detail we must turn our attention to some aspects of the Lutheran conception of the state which have already received cursory mention.

From the days of Luther onward the Lutheran tradition has always described the civil authority as the "*Obrigkeit.*" [11] What does this mean? We have already alluded to the tendency to conceive the common life as a whole in terms of super- and sub-ordination, of the exercise of authority and obedient response. Now the specific character of *Obrigkeit* (authority) lies in the fact that it is a public office "above," and also in a certain sense "over against," all other offices and callings. Precisely because the state has a peculiar task it must claim supreme authority over social life. Without a stable government which can inspire loyalty and respect and, if necessary, weld together and direct the various conflicting forces, society would inevitably be exposed to the danger of anarchy. The fact that the state is, and indeed must be, *Obrigkeit* (authority) implies that it is the organ, or in other words the group of persons, which possesses the right of supreme command and final decision within the community. Part of the inviolable dignity of political authority lies in the fact that its right to govern is not derived from any earthly power but from God alone.

The corollary of this conception of the *Obrigkeit* as an organ of sovereign and personal decision is the claim that in the last resort responsibility for the direction of the state does not belong to the nation, nor to public opinion, nor to any class or party; the state is responsible *for* the community, *in the sight of* God and of his sovereign will. The subordination of the political authority to any partial func-

11 Like the word *Volk, Obrigkeit* belongs to that class of words in the German language for which no adequate equivalent can be found in other languages, since it is impossible to suggest the peculiar associations and feelings which this word evokes in German-speaking countries.

tion of society, whether that of finance or anything else, is accordingly regarded as a serious failure of the state in its God-given task, a failure which tends to denude it of political substance. The supremacy of the government over the social forces, its power to differentiate and direct, if necessary even against the popular will, constitutes its moral responsibility. This insistence on the authoritarian character of the state, which has been described by a Lutheran as "self-evident for Christian teaching,"[12] corresponds with an insistence upon voluntary obedience and willing service as the main political virtue. In obedient submission to the rules and ordinances of the authority of the state, man recognizes that its authority is based upon a supra-human reality.

There can be no doubt that this conception of political authority has frequently led to a persistent conservatism and to an acquiescence in existing conditions. The unqualified assertion that the powers that be are ordained of God leads all too easily to toleration of every existing authority in all its ways. But such tolerance is not inevitable. Lutherans lay more and more stress on the fact that political loyalty, if it is to remain personal, cannot be combined with any view of the state as absolute. Disobedience to the ordinances of the state when they cannot be reconciled with the demands of conscience, as well as resistance to obvious injustice and caprice, does not mean that obedience is renounced or that the state is denied; rather it is the affirmation of the necessity for and the dignity of genuine authority. But the absolute refusal to countenance any rebellion against the powers that be, as well as emphasis on the fact that the citizen ought to accept without complaint the consequences of his conscientious disobedience,

[12] Wendland, *Die Nation vor Gott*, p. 187.

is further evidence that Lutheranism has a high sense of the value of political order as an absolute necessity.

Thus this traditional theory of the *Obrigkeit* contains a twofold religious motive — although this idea receives various differing interpretations and is sometimes confused with other motives and interests. On the one hand, it is insistence on the fact that even the political order of life must be regarded not as a product of human effort but as a gift from above, gratefully accepted as a manifestation of the fatherly rule of God; and, further, it is recognition that the world is "possessed" by a devil, a fact which makes a supreme and invincible authority and strict loyalty toward that authority an indispensable guarantee against social self-destruction. The Lutheran tradition has directed its chief attention to the significance of these religious motives for the legitimation of political authority, a legitimation which has often found a practical corollary in passive acceptance of existing political conditions. It is obvious that this is a one-sided interpretation. It is hardly necessary to point out that these motives also provide a great stimulus to citizens of a state to cooperate cordially and intelligently with the authorities.

As a rule Lutheran thinkers regard power and law as the constitutive elements of political authority, with the power of coercion as an inseparable element logically issuing from them. The Roman Catholic tradition interprets the political realities as being more or less empirical variations of the unchangeable structure of the law of nature. What has already been said has made it clear that Lutheranism has a conception of the constitutive elements of politics different from that of either Thomism or modernist Protestantism. Its keener eye for the actuality of and the necessity for power in political life is closely connected with its

dynamic view of history and its sense of the need for independent decision in political matters, owing to the frailty of legal organizations in a world rent by the conflict of demonic forces.[13] The state is, and ought to be, a concentration of social power. The exercise of power, which in certain cases extends also over the property and the life of the citizens, belongs to the nature of the state.

Not without reason has it been said that this strong emphasis on the element of power might well lead to a positivist theory of law and a religious sanction of the political *fait accompli;* in practice this has frequently been the case. But the rejection of the law of nature, at least in its Roman Catholic form, does not in any way imply a denial of the fact that justice must be the normative principle of political authority. The arbitrary seizure and exercise of social power does not constitute political authority as such; the latter is inseparably connected with law and justice. As a rule, even in Lutheran thought, the preservation of a legal order is suggested as the primary purpose of the state.

The extremely difficult question then arises: What are the criteria for a Christian judgment of right and wrong in the political sphere? The attempts to answer this question follow different lines of thought. Although the metaphysical and theological frame of reference of the Roman Catholic doctrine of natural law is rejected, some thinkers affirm the existence of certain elementary moral and legal norms of universal and irreversible validity which must be realized by the state if it wishes to claim to be a genuine *Obrigkeit* (authority), norms apart from which it loses its *raison d'être.* In spite of the great divergences in the sense of right and wrong which can be adduced at different periods

[13] Lutheran thinkers also emphasize the fact that "the fundamental task of the state is the administration of the law." Althaus, *Die Kirche und das Staatsproblem in der Gegenwart,* p. 6.

and in different countries, working out in extremely different and even contrasting types of legislation and jurisdiction, there is an instinctive consensus concerning not only the sacred dignity of the principle of right (or law: *Recht*), but also, to a great extent, the content of this principle. And this natural sense of justice is simply the dawning of the perception of the divine law which is written deeply on the heart of man. This law is authoritatively confirmed and expounded in the second table of the Decalogue. This provides a valid formulation of the minimum of law which ought to be realized and enforced in the political community.

Others, however, take a different view, and point to the relativity of all moral concepts and attitudes. The value that justice represents in the life of the community cannot be derived from a universally valid set of moral and legal norms, even if it were to appeal to a Christian sanction. The category of justice itself alone has absolute and universal validity.

All historical law is determined by politics, that is, it receives its concrete determination and its aim from the historical reality of the nation whose life it has to order.[14]

The individual elements which law contains (the positive law) are to a large extent simple moral duties, refracted, however, in a particular way by concrete conditions of power, civilization and life. Hence the positive law is very largely determined by historical conditions, and is thus subject to change, criticism and continued development. In all this the ideal of justice is the guiding principle, both as the standard of criticism and as the motive for the continued development of the law. This ideal does not signify an order which is normative and binding for all ages ("natural law") which could be expressed in definite general rules ("rights of man," equality, etc.). It can never be an empirical fact, but it is laid upon each succeeding generation afresh as the duty of the concrete

[14] Althaus, *Die Kirche und das Staatsproblem in der Gegenwart*, p. 6.

fulfillment of the positive law in each new historical situation as it arises, with the aim of making it possible for human beings to live together in real community in the kingdom of God. But although it represents the absolute idea of law in a very fragmentary and limited manner, the positive law still has a direct share in the inviolable character of law as such. Every breach of the law not only sins against the actual statute concerned, but also against law as a whole.[15]

Our first quotation illustrates a vital element in the newer Lutheran political philosophy, especially in Germany, namely, the widespread tendency to interpret the state in terms of the national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*). Speaking generally, this tendency no longer means the maintenance of law and order as conceived in the traditional doctrine of *Obrigkeit,* but rather the dynamic realization of the historical destiny of the nation (*Volk*) as the highest ethical principle of political life. In our present context it is only possible to outline the general argument. Its starting point is the assertion that the fact of nationality is based upon the will of the Creator. The nations whose free self-development and growth are the integrating principle of all social life are the chief carriers of historical life; the development of their moral and cultural individuality, their responsible struggle for the realization of their own mission in response to the call of the Creator, is the main theme of history. The super-individual character of the nation, its natural tendencies and its necessities, constitute the original fount whence the nature of the state is derived; to make the nation secure and further its interests, both within and without, is the will of God for the state. The state and its law are the organic form in which a nation realizes its historical self-consciousness. The recognition of the ethical obligations which inhere in the natural bonds of the national community (*Volksgemein-*

[15] Althaus, *Grundriss der Ethik,* pp. 97–98.

schaft) or, to express it rather differently, "the objective national spirit" (*Volksgeist*) is accordingly the motive force and the critical norm of political activity in all its aspects, executive, legislative and judicial.

Thus this conception of the state seeks the answer in a religious interpretation of the nation (*Volk*) as an order of creation. When we assume that the will of God for the common life is revealed in the historical events of the nation, the conclusion is inevitable that the political attitude of the Christian is also wholly determined by the obligations of the national ethos.

As we saw in the preceding chapter, there is a fairly large group of Lutherans which, even if with some reservations, holds this view. As a rule, however, where this extreme conception is rejected as incompatible with the genuinely Christian understanding of life, this transference of ethical reflection from the state to the nation does not constitute a final answer to our question. Since it rightly emphasizes the significance of the national factor and the sense of nationality for the Christian attitude toward the state, it only makes the answer dependent upon another unsolved and highly controversial question, namely, the Christian understanding of the individual nation and its divine vocation.

Many other Lutherans therefore lay stress on the point that the close connection of a particular state with a particular nation, which is presupposed in this argument, is only a historical contingency; hence it cannot determine the essential elements of the political ethos. To subordinate political sovereignty to the national destiny in this way means that the distinctive authority of the state as a divine institution is in danger of being lost. This view also tends to ignore another equally important issue in political ethics, namely, the common responsibility of statesmen and citi-

zens for the establishment of peace and order in the international as well as in the national sphere.

This brief survey has indicated some of the chief features of the Lutheran conception of the state. Political authority, with its exercise of might and right, must be understood — in spite of the fact that it is sometimes terribly entangled with the demonic forces of this world — as a manifestation of the fatherly rule of God. The task of the state, which is to protect and further the interests of the personal life in community, gains its central importance through the fact that behind the state there stands the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The will of the Creator and Preserver for the political order has been revealed in the working of the Redeemer through his church.

It cannot be denied that at this point the Lutheran tradition is often hesitating. Sometimes it has even gone so far as to assent explicitly to a dualism between Christian faith and political life, based on the fact that it has not always been able to maintain the paradoxical unity between the Creator and the Redeemer. The sphere of political activity and legal order, with its harshness and lovelessness, but at the same time with its peculiar greatness and dignity, was regarded as governed by immanental principles, while the life of pure love was relegated to the inner world of the heart. The majesty of divine power and justice, which operates in the state, was severed from the suffering and self-sacrificing love which is at the heart of the Christian message. Thus the relation between the kingdom of Christ and the political sphere was regarded as a tension of static parallelism and not as a tension of dynamic transformation. This view led to the tendency to obey without question and with complete fidelity the decisions of the state in all public matters, while freedom was claimed for the church within her own sphere. The recurring dif-

ficulty in Lutheran political thought of formulating a homogeneous and distinctively Christian view of the sphere of politics is due to this spirit and outlook.

Within modern Lutheranism, however, there is a growing emphasis upon the assertion that the will of God for the world as Creator and Preserver cannot be perceived apart from his redeeming act in Christ. The unfathomable mystery of the incarnation, the death and the resurrection of Christ reveals God to us as a God whose all-conquering power and consuming holiness is expressed in a lavish and generous love toward the rebellious world. In God power and justice and love are one, in a paradoxical tension. In the polarity of might and right, which constitutes the state as a divine institution, the loving God is secretly at work; in the seeking, forgiving and conquering love which constitutes the church as a divine institution, the almighty and just God wrestles with the powers of evil and of death. Thus God's operation in the state is at the service of the community of love whose head and king is Christ, while, on the other hand, only under the influence of Christ can the divine intention of the state be perceived and realized. The relevance of the state for the gospel, in the whole extent of its influence upon the individual and the corporate life, is therefore the final criterion for the Christian judgment on political matters.

This trend of thought in modern Lutheranism, with its paradoxical interpretation of the state as an instrument of divine love,[16] has no desire to veil the contrast between the empirical realities of political life and the community of love by cherishing any illusions. Church and state remain different in their functions and in their methods. Even when the state is able to prevent the worst effects of social

16 Cf. Runestam, *Die Kirche und das Staatsproblem,* pp. 116 ff., and Wendland, *Die Nation vor Gott,* p. 191.

evil by its powerful control, and thus helps to promote a good life in community, it has no competence to exercise the office of the church, to proclaim in its witness and in its life God's triumphant victory over the powers of evil. And the attempt to mold or to enforce religious conviction by political means is foreign to the spirit of the gospel. But precisely in its unique quality the presence of the gospel in the political order is both a blessing and a judgment. It does not mean a denial of political rule. It does not annul the demand that power must be restrained by justice and equity in order that it may not degenerate into the caprice of the tyrant or into that demonic spirit which is the very antithesis of the gospel. Nor does it deny that right must be supported by compulsory power to prevent it from becoming ineffective and thus leading to anarchy. On the contrary, it makes this demand still more radical, since it drives home to the conscience of both the ruler and his subjects that the God who has revealed himself in Christ as sovereign and holy love is the true ruler of the state. The religious conviction that the sword of the state is wielded in the "wrath of love" (Luther) affirms its legitimacy insofar as it is necessary for the proper functioning of the state; at the same time it helps us to distinguish those methods of coercion which are absolutely incompatible with the will of God.

Thus "justification by faith" — which in the Lutheran tradition constitutes the center of the Christian faith — becomes the source and the principle of a political ethos which while waiting for the coming kingdom of God set up by God's own act, where the purpose of the state and the church will be fulfilled and transcended, fights for a perpetual transformation of the political order which will provide more suitable conditions for a true life, both human and Christian.

IX

CALVINISTIC VIEWS OF THE STATE

THE EFFECTS of the Calvinistic Reformation upon the political sphere, which both historically and geographically have been immense, are so well known that they can be taken for granted. Calvin's own attempt to set up a Christian state in Geneva itself; the influence of the Calvinistic spirit, in various directions, upon political developments and constitutions — in Holland, Scotland and the United States of America, to mention a few striking examples — its connection with democratic, liberal and international movements and aspirations, are all well known. Opinion upon these facts has been greatly divided. Some Christian observers have often criticized the Calvinist view as "legalism," "moralistic activism," or the "misguided use of the Old Testament as a grammar of politics," etc.; but these criticisms do not touch the heart of the question. These developments, which in many quarters nowadays are even gaining fresh impetus and a new religious depth, are expressions of a religion which desires to give powerful and convincing testimony in all spheres of life to the sovereign will of God, and regards politics as a special field of Christian opportunity and responsibility. To the extent to which this motive has been effective the political history of Calvinism constitutes a challenge to other churches.

As we have already seen, contemporary Calvinism is also taking an active share in the reconsideration of the social and political task of the church in the new world situation. It is well known that modernist Protestantism and strict

neo-Calvinism — in which again, for instance, the names of Karl Barth and Emil Brunner represent very different positions — hold very different and even opposing views on these questions.

It would, however, be correct to say that wherever the Calvinist tradition exercises a living influence we can observe a tendency on the part of those who hold these views to come much closer together in their estimate of and practical attitude toward the state. For instance, Karl Barth's uncompromising campaign — waged with prophetic fearlessness — to keep the gospel entirely free from a totalitarian philosophy of life as well as against the subordination of the organization and administration of the church to political ends, has won universal sympathy among Reformed Protestants — and naturally also among the members of other churches — quite apart from the fact that in other directions their religious views differ widely from one another.

Another important element in this situation which we must not forget when we consider the general view of church and state within continental Reformed Protestantism is the following fact: The common experiences born of the present struggle of the German church have brought Calvinists and Lutherans nearer to one another in an amazing way; several of them have testified to this rapprochement in public confessions of faith and have given common witness to the strong consensus which exists among them on certain central points of the Christian faith, and also in their attitude toward the state. We may indeed hope and expect that this common process of wrestling with the problems of church and state, and the new views which have been gained as the fruit of common tribulations and common spiritual experiences, will prove a fruitful leaven in the experience of other churches as they wrestle with the same vital problems.

So we come back to the fact that the old denominational groupings do not present a true picture of the common elements and divergent views which exist within the political thought of Christianity at the present time. In order to simplify matters, we shall in the following presentation of the subject confine our attention mainly to some Swiss neo-Calvinist thinkers whose general position, so we may suppose, can count on considerable agreement within Calvinistic Christianity on the continent, even in quarters where the attitude toward the "theology of the orders" (which lies behind this view) would be only partially accepted, or possibly entirely rejected. Since at important points this position is closely connected with the Lutheran theory, which holds that the sanction of the state resides in its "restrictive mitigation of social evil," in order to avoid unnecessary repetitions it may be sufficient to note some of the distinctive features only.[1]

First of all a few words about the general approach. As we said at the beginning, the Reformed tradition has always been greatly concerned with the political implications of Christianity. It has always regarded active cooperation in the work of shaping public order as a particularly important Christian duty. It has educated its followers to be active citizens of the state to which they belong, impressing upon them that they have no right to regard the sphere of politics as morally irrelevant or as merely subject to its own immanent laws; in spite of the fact that political life presents peculiar difficulties to the Christian conscience, it is still under the control of God as sovereign Lord.

This claim is being reiterated by contemporary Calvinism with renewed energy. In opposition to the prevailing

1 For the prevailing tendencies of the political ethos in Anglo-Saxon Reformed Protestantism, cf. the instructive books by W. A. Brown, *Church and State in Contemporary America,* and A. E. Garvie, *The Fatherly Rule of God.*

tendencies to make the state into an absolute for which good and evil do not exist or to make it the obedient instrument of economic, national, racial or other ideologies, Calvinism maintains that the church cannot avoid having a definite responsibility for the state. The church has no right to be content with the mere permission of the state to provide for the spiritual needs of the faithful. The usual dualism which exists between a spiritual sphere and a temporal sphere supposed to be subject to its own ethical laws, is an error which has done a great deal to further the severance of the political forces from the standards of Christianity. The message of the church, on the contrary, has a bearing on all men and on all the aspects of human life, including that of politics. This active and almost aggressive attitude toward the ethical issues of the political order is well expressed in the following passage:

> The Christian church throughout the world must not allow herself to be pushed any further in the direction of a merely defensive attitude over against a political authority which is becoming more and more secular as time goes on. . . . It is in accordance with the genuine and unadulterated Reformed tradition to recognize that cooperation in the life of the state is an integral part of the task which God has entrusted to the church in this world. . . . We believe that the divine command to the Christian church, the command contained in the Scriptures, lays upon her the responsibility for the formation of the state, in so far as the historical situation gives her any power of action at all in this respect. Among the different nations, wherever the Christian church has any possibility of cooperating with the political life of the country in question she must use all her influence to get God's sovereign claims recognized, even in the system of legislation, in the administration of justice and in legal decisions.[2]

The original source and the guiding principles of this sense of political responsibility reside in the revelation con-

[2] Peter Barth in his paper in *Totaler Staat und christliche Freiheit.*

tained in the Scriptures. This emphasis on the revelation in the Scriptures, especially in the Old Testament, as normative for political life is also a familiar feature of the Calvinist tradition. When Christianity considers her political mission afresh she must take the message of the Bible as her starting point. Only on this condition will she avoid the danger of allowing her political views to be simply the wholesale adoption of temporary political systems and ideologies. Only then will there be any hope of seeing the vicissitudes of the present situation in their right perspective, and only then will there be hope of a reformulation of the Christian position in the light of fundamental Christian views. It is not denied that each situation is a fresh one and that personal political decisions must be taken here and now. But at the same time those who hold this view insist that this decision does not represent an isolated event. The message of the Bible throws light on the nature and the divine function of the political order which provides guidance for Christian politics always and everywhere. At the same time, in the ceaseless process of change which is always going on in the state we must not overlook its permanent structure. "In the variety of forms in which it appears, from the state of primitive times down to the state of the present day," says Professor Max Huber,[3] "a general sociological institution is formed which can be addressed as the state. This too is the state as it is understood in the Bible. The state is the supreme organization of power in human society which controls the life and property of its members. In some form or another this state is always present. Without it human society drifts into chaos, and chaos again forces men to reorganize the state." [4]

[3] At one time president of the International Court of Justice at The Hague.

[4] *Die Kirche und das Staatsproblem in der Gegenwart,* p. 56.

Thus the Christian discussion of the problem connected with the contemporary state is no haphazard proceeding; it is not without firm guidance and control. However the opinions of individual Christians and groups may change, insofar as they claim to be genuinely Christian they must move within the boundary lines drawn once for all by the biblical revelation about God and the state.

In this view, what is the religious and ethical significance of the state? Brunner suggests the reply to the question in the following unambiguous statement: "That the Christian affirms the necessity for the state is the correlate of his knowledge of original sin." [5] Here, in point of fact, is the central point of this Reformed doctrine of the state; the various ways in which it is expressed are all related to this central tenet.

Human society does not present the picture of organic and harmonious development. It is ceaselessly menaced by destruction. The Christian conception of man and of his world reveals the cause. For some unfathomable reason man seeks to sever his connection with God and to make himself the center of the world. This rebellion against God sets man against man and works havoc in society. Only against this background is it possible fully to understand the significance of the political order.

At this point we must remind ourselves of the distinction between the "order of creation" and the "order of preservation" which was mentioned in an earlier chapter. At first sight this distinction may seem to be a merely scholastic speculation; in this context, however, its directly practical significance becomes evident. It implies that the life of the state lies upon a different plane from that of the family and the general cultural life of man. The latter are the

[5] *Der Staat als Problem der Kirche,* p. 12.

result of God's creative action. That is also true of the state insofar as it is the most inclusive form of social community. But that which differentiates it from all other social institutions is the fact that it is secondary; its aim is to prevent humanity from destroying itself.

In an impressive passage, in phrases which are evidently inspired by the desire to bring out the crucial point as forcibly as possible, Brunner reiterates his conviction that " the existence of the state is justified solely and entirely by the fact of sin; that is, the state is a means of counteracting the destructive influence of sin upon life and society, by means of coercion, in order that it may provide the basis for a life which is at least in some measure human. The organized inhumanity (organized force or coercion) of the state is the means by which the essentially *human* quality of life is preserved." [6] And Huber regards the distinctive characteristic of the state as an illustration of the profound truth expressed by Paul in the phrase, " The wages of sin is death " (Rom. 6:23). " It is impressive to note that the state, which wields the sword, in its final consequences always ends with death. The order of coercion by means of which the state maintains peace and order within the nation presupposes as an ultimate possibility the imposition of the extreme penalty, the destruction of those who resist this enforcement of order." [7]

But the state does not only stand in a peculiarly close relation to the evil element in society in the fact that it checks the worst results of this evil element. We must go a step further and point out something which shows still more clearly the paradoxical nature of the Christian view of the state. The study of political history shows very clearly and with abundant evidence, and the revelation of

[6] *Die Kirche und das Staatsproblem,* p. 12.
[7] *Ibid.,* p. 57.

Scripture affirms it as a mysterious method of divine providence, that the state can fulfill its preserving function in society only if it is able to meet harshness with harshness and to assert a controlling force over against destructive violence. The distinctive quality of the state is the power of coercion.[8]

Hence it must be recognized that it is not only the dominion of evil which makes the state an indispensable condition of human society, but that evil belongs to the very nature of the state itself. "The compulsive character of the state — and this means what we call the 'state' — is not an expression of the will of the Creator."[9] Compulsion is sinful; it is utterly irreconcilable with the claims of love. It is true, of course, that this distinctive quality of the state is not always in evidence. The dim sense that behind political authority there stands a higher, superhuman power, an awareness which exists everywhere, however rationally the binding character of the laws may be explained; the psychological effects of the consciousness that behind all the decrees of the state there stands the *ultima ratio* of the sword; the various other methods by means of which pressure is brought to bear upon those who resist, which the machinery of the state has at its disposal — all these factors bring it about that very few of the actual conflicts within the community need to be settled by the actual intervention of the coercive authority of the state. But nonetheless it is always a menace in the background.

By this exclusive, or almost exclusive, insistence on the fact that the "theological locus" of the state is in the Christian doctrine of sin, this whole view is in sharp opposition not only to all optimistic or idealistic philosophies, but also

[8] It is important to note this narrow conception of the state, because it determines, and to some extent explains, this doctrine of the state as a whole.

[9] Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, p. 445.

to most of the other schools of Christian political thought in our own day. This view, however, claims to do no more than to carry a stage further the classical lines of Christian thought about the state as laid down in the classic Christian doctrine of St. Paul, the Fathers and the Reformers of the sixteenth century. It insists that the Christian understanding of life in particular has no right to moralize or idealize the state, but that it ought to regard it soberly, as it is, in all its harshness. The rationalizations with which the brutal realities of politics are constantly justified by its supporters, or by well meaning Christians, must be seen through and denounced. For "the state is of this world, it is indeed even the most concentrated form of this world; it is a hundred per cent secular. In the state the temporal aeon, the world which is passing away, reaches its zenith. Its relation to the kingdom of God is one of complete difference of nature and even of opposition."[10] Some might suggest in reply that this pessimistic view may perhaps be regarded as an adequate expression of the primitive Christian attitude toward the heathen state, but in our Western civilization, where states have been exposed for centuries to a process of prolonged and profound Christian influence, the view is either mistaken or at least very one-sided. This objection, however, cannot be admitted. It overlooks the fact that in its essence the state has always remained the same. "A Christian state is a sheer impossibility; a Christian state is as impossible as a Christian police force, a Christian prison or a Christian system of penal legislation."[11] Thus this Reformed doctrine seems to see no connection between the political order and the gospel; they are mutually exclusive. Self-sacrificing love which pours itself out in service is the very opposite of dominating force.

10 Brunner, *Der Staat als Problem der Kirche,* p. 4.
11 *Ibid.*

But this doctrine does not merely emphasize the evil and harsh aspect of the state; it also affirms the state as a divine order, as an instrument of the unfathomable love of God which transcends all human reason, and also uses methods which seem quite remote from his Spirit in order to achieve its ends. Without the protecting wall of the power of coercion humanity would be exposed to the danger of disintegration. The husk of the state protects the growth of all the finer flowers of cultural, moral and religious life. It preserves humanity for its meeting with Christ, with all the blessing that this means. It creates free scope for the activity of the church and for the exercise of Christian virtues. The religious significance of the state lies therefore in this very fact: that it protects men from the socially disruptive effects of their own selfishness and thus provides the indispensable framework for a truly human and Christian life. Hence faith is compelled without hesitation to regard the exercise of political authority — however opposed to divine love it may seem to be — as an instrument used by God in his providential government of the world.

This point of view, so it is maintained, based on a biblical realism, throws fresh light on the everyday realities of political life, and helps us to perceive more plainly the contradictory character of the state and to form a clearer judgment on it than the usual political philosophies and moral theories are able to do.

The two main currents of political philosophy — that of positivism and that of idealism — give interpretations of the nature of the state which differ so widely from each other that it seems impossible to reconcile them.

Positivism regards the state as the result of the sociological balance of power at any particular time. The state, its origin and its growth, cannot be explained either from the point of view of reason or from that of ethics. In the

irrational course of history states rise and decay and only struggle to attain the highest possible development of their power. The establishment of law and order is merely a utilitarian self-limitation imposed by the dominant social group. Suddenly the balance of social power breaks down; in outbreaks of blind destructive violence the existing order is destroyed and a new balance of power is established in which every group tries to "make" as much as possible for its own *sacro egoismo,* without any consideration for the claims of morality and justice.

In contrast to this positivistic theory with its realistic empiricism is idealistic political philosophy of various kinds. The state is not the enemy of the spirit; it is rather the supreme and all-inclusive incorporation of the world-spirit. The brutalities of political power therefore do not belong to the nature of the state; they are unfortunate relics of a temporary stage of its historical development, or they are justified as absolutely necessary methods for the fuller historical realization of the moral idea.

Emil Brunner maintains that insofar as these two theories claim to give a picture of the state as a whole they are erroneous.[12] At the same time it must be recognized that both of them contain a partial truth — which, however, they make into an absolute and thus distort the truth as a whole. The Christian view of the state is broad enough and deep enough to recognize the contradictory features in the picture of the state, with its twofold aspect, without trying to make them into a synthesis. For it alone is able to disclose the profound source of this incomprehensible ambiguity of the state, namely, the existential contradiction in man himself, a person who perverts his creaturehood. "The gospel, like the message of the Bible as a whole," says Max Huber,

12 *The Divine Imperative,* pp. 442 ff.

is filled with an utterly sure sense of reality, it is absolutely genuine and honest. Hence it continually admits the reality of sin and evil; this means that all optimistic phantasies about man are swept away; at the same time it does not fall into the other extreme of a paralyzing pessimism, for the gospel is full of the truth that man was created in the image of God and that he has a divine calling. All illusions about the possibility of what man can effect by his own unaided efforts, by human organization, for the establishment of a world of fellowship and peace are excluded. For even in such action, even when man appeals to the gospel for support, wherever man is at work, all he does is tainted with evil. This very fact constitutes a special danger, since it is more difficult to recognize the presence of evil here than in the sphere of the naked struggle for power.[13]

Therefore the Christian ventures, or indeed is specially called, boldly to confront the demonic powers which are at work within all political life, and to show them up as they are. For only so is it possible to resist them effectively. Otherwise, if their smoke screens of conscious or unconscious rationalizations and flaming symbols are not swept away, they can carry on their nefarious activities quite undisturbed. The Christian faith recognizes in all sobriety that all states have been born in sin. They arise out of wars, revolutions, ruthless enforcement of the will to power of a particular group. The states continue to live in sin. In no other part of human life are cruelty and tyranny so prevalent, and nowhere else have they such endless opportunities as in the exercise of political power. Law is diverted from its high purpose and made subject to the self-centered interests of conflicting groups. Nowhere else do the diabolical depths of the state appear so plainly as in the cataclysm of war, which either causes man to recoil in horror or hypnotizes him into wild enthusiasm. But

the hate and brutality which emerge in war are merely the intenser expression of feelings and thoughts which exist and

[13] *Der Christ und die Politik,* p. 14.

indeed are cultivated in time of peace. The way in which civilized nations are infected with this poison comes out very plainly in the cold-blooded way in which the possibilities of so-called " chemical warfare " are considered, methods of warfare which both in effect and in rapidity of action far outstrip all the horrors of previous wars and revolutionary terror, and degrade man to the purely material plane.[14]

From this point of view, therefore, " every state represents human sin on the large scale; in history, in the growth of every state the most brutal, anti-divine forces have taken a share, to an extent unheard of in the individual life, save in that of some prominent criminals. In the state we human beings see our own sin magnified a thousand times. The state is the product of collective sin." [15]

The Christian ethic, however, must also take into consideration the other aspect of the state and must try to estimate its spiritual significance. Man tends to take the foundations of his existence for granted. But revolutions and civil wars suggest what a blessing lies in the fact that the state establishes a condition of comparative order and peace in the community and thus prevents complete chaos. Under the guiding and disciplining hand of political authority the nations have been led to develop their dormant capacities and to accomplish great historical tasks. The fulfillment of the vast responsibilities of high statesmanship and the loyal discharge of civil duties have evoked the noblest human virtues. The cooperation of the state has made possible the suppression of slavery, a juster distribution of social and economic privileges, large-scale charity in times of distress, etc., which otherwise would not have been possible. Within the framework of the political order culture and religion have been able to flourish. Divine grace is at work within every state and uses it for the divine pur-

14 Huber, *Staatenpolitik und Evangelium,* p. 11

15 Brunner, *The Divine Imperative,* p. 445.

pose. Every Christian judgment on political matters, therefore, is dialectic: it must always reflect the view that "over every state there broods something of the light of the divine creation and a heavy cloud of anti-divine forces." [16]

Let us now try to discover very briefly what conclusions are drawn from this Reformed conception of the state which will throw light on the individual elements in the state, namely, coercive power and law.

From what has already been said it should be clear that — like the Lutheran doctrine of authority — this conception also has a strong feeling for the actual existence and the moral necessity of powerful authority. The state not only *has* power, it *is* power. "The fundamental character of the state is not right but might," says Brunner.[17] It is true, of course, that might, in the broad sense of the word, is a universal quality of life. All social relations, from this point of view, are only different forms of relations of power. But what distinguishes the state from all other forms of power is its absolute supremacy, its final power of authority within a given community. And most of the power which is exercised in some way or other is placed under the conditions and according to the rules which are set by the supreme authority of the state. Without such a central point in the community — whatever its personal supports may be, and however it may be related to the community legally and constitutionally — the centrifugal forces would plunge into chaos. A social authority whose decisions shall be final is inevitable. Its distinctive quality is expressed in the fact that it can force those who resist to obey, and that finally it exercises the power of life and death over its citizens. Especially if the state is to achieve its main purpose, namely, to preserve society from disintegration, it must reso-

[16] Brunner, *The Divine Imperative,* p. 446.
[17] *Ibid.*

lutely confront force with force, and it must have sufficient force at its disposal so that there may be no suspicion of any inability on its part to maintain order. In order to prevent the devastating release of the forces of evil it must itself use evil, that is, force. In order to prevent the community entrusted to its care from being destroyed, both from within and without, it must itself be able to destroy. The tragic character of this ethical dilemma of coercive power both for statesmen and for the ordinary citizen, as well as the terrible danger of this concentration of power in the state and its inherent tendency toward absolutism and totalitarianism, is emphasized in this school of Reformed thought in a way which clearly distinguishes it from much of the traditional thought of Lutheranism and often reminds us of the spirit of the Eastern Orthodox view of the state.

But this strong emphasis on coercive power as the *differentia specifica* of the state, which we regard as characteristic of this point of view, does not exclude a broad understanding of the fact that political power neither may nor should build only upon force.

It is essential that the state should possess authority, that is, that it should evoke from its subjects willing obedience, respect and loyalty. Sheer power and brutal force are in the long run self-destructive. A political regime which does not give the community the assurance that it is exercising its power for the good of the whole not only undermines its own authority but exposes society to the danger of destruction. "Where this kind of recognition of the state has been lost, so far as the state is concerned all is over. When things have come to this pass, no battalions and no machine guns will be of any use. Where the state is regarded merely as a human institution, established for utilitarian reasons only, it no longer has any real authority

or power; for even physical force is effective only when it is combined with that spiritual power which is inherent in real authority."[18]

The fear of possible coercion, or a rational appreciation of the utility of political government, or similar motives, cannot explain the nature of political authority. It is rooted in a general sense of common responsibility shared both by those who govern and by those who are governed; its ultimate source is religious. Therefore, in view of the conflicting tendencies of the present day which either undermine or deify political authority, it is the special duty of Christians to proclaim clearly that political authority possesses a divine sanction; hence it cannot be deified, but, nonetheless, it must not on any account be undermined.

The fact that this school of Calvinist thought lays so much emphasis upon the element of might and force in the political order, however, must not lead us to the conclusion that for all practical purposes it leads to the justification of a Machiavellian position. Its emphasis upon the belief that the original source of political authority lies in a divine initiative and exists to serve a divine purpose leads definitely in another direction; moreover, this is attested by the position occupied in this body of thought by the principle of law.

The exercise of political power is not an end in itself. Its sanction lies in the fact that by the establishment of a stable order of law it removes the danger of social chaos and thus creates the external conditions for the peaceful discharge of social functions.

This insistence upon law is a characteristic element in the Reformed tradition and is closely connected with its whole view of life. It would probably be correct to say that even at the present day in the main it is Calvinist

[18] Brunner, *Der Staat als Problem der Kirche,* p. 12.

thinkers, jurists and theologians who are making an intensive effort to think out the problem of law from the Christian point of view, being persuaded that here we are concerned with one of the central problems of Christian responsibility in national and international politics. This is not the place to deal in greater detail with these efforts to create a Christian understanding of law in the continental Calvinism of the present. As in the earlier chapters of this book, we must be content merely to indicate the general approach to the subject, illustrating it by the Swiss thinkers whom we have already mentioned.

Brunner's statements are very plain: "The state exists for the sake of the law." [19] "The moral dignity and religious justification of the state are dependent on the fact that the coercive power of the state serves the law. . . . The state is essentially a law-state. The preservation of human life by means of coercive power is its *raison d'être.*" [20] Over against divergent interpretations he makes it clear in another context that the purpose of the state is "law, not civilization, nor national unity." [21] And Huber reminds us again of the basic premise of these convictions when he says that "it is the duty of the state, as an order of law and of coercive power, to check the progress of that evil which would otherwise spread so freely, and to arrest its growth and influence." [22]

What, however, is here meant by *law?* Law is a particular way of ordering the life of society. But even in its mere power to create order it reveals certain formal characteristics which from the Christian point of view are not irrelevant, but must be affirmed as having a positive value. Law is a check on caprice. Both to individuals and groups,

19 *The Divine Imperative,* p. 448.
20 Brunner, in the *Neue Schweizer Rundschau,* Jan., 1934.
21 *Der Staat als Problem der Kirche,* p. 17.
22 *Staatenpolitik und Evangelium,* p. 13.

and to the political authorities, it guarantees a certain permanence and stability of action. If the order of law did not exist it would be impossible to foresee the future and thus all action would be paralyzed. In contrast with all the unreliable and incalculable elements in life, law means reliability and security. Thus law contains a conservative element, a certain rigidity which is indispensable for it if it is to carry out its purpose. At the same time society is in a state of continual flux. New groups and classes emerge into the light of history and fight for a place in life, while others are suppressed; new ideals and ethical values remold the common mind. A changing situation is reflected gradually in a changing law, in order that the freedom of growth which law insures shall not be thwarted.

Another essential element in law is its tendency to be as universal as possible. If law is not valid for all times and in all places, it defeats its own ends; that is, it fails to provide a certain degree of stability and security and the power to plan for the future of the race. Brunner has a passage on this subject which is worth quoting since it brings out very clearly the traditional Calvinist concern for the establishment not only of a national but of an international order of law:

> The utmost universal validity possible is inherent in the very idea of law itself. The Christian's primary interest in the state is not that a people should crystallize its national unity in the state, but that the state should actually establish law. Therefore it is not so much the concern of the Christian state to assert the utmost measure of sovereignty possible for the individual state as it is to emphasize the claim that the sovereign states themselves should be bound by law to one another, and that there should be no anarchy in their relation to one another. Opposition to anarchy, to the brutal struggle for power, is indeed the one divine legitimation of the state. The same opposition, however, applies also to international anarchy,

which is the result of the absolute sovereignty of the individual state. Just as the internal authority of the state, that is, the power of the state over its own countrymen, groups and spheres of life, is based upon and limited by law, so is it also with power in the international sphere. The idea of international law springs necessarily from the Christian idea of the state, and the obligation to champion the system of international law against the brutal international struggle for power is the natural inference from the biblical argument for the state.[23]

The question of the relation between law and human society takes us a step further in the understanding of law. To put it more precisely: Is law an organic expression of the basic unity, and of the common and freely accepted will to unity, within the community, or is it primarily an expression of broken unity, a restraining barrier between conflicting ends and interests? It is evident that the Christian doctrines of community and of original sin are not without relevance for the answer to this question.

If we believe in the essential goodness of the natural man, in the permanence of true community behind social conflicts, we tend to regard civil law as a positive expression — of course more or less imperfect — of the divine order of persons and things, and to minimize, at least in theory, the necessity for coercive power in the maintenance of law and order. A further consequence is the harmonious correlation of law and love, and along with this an emphasis on the legal and institutional aspects of religion.

Another main conception, which asserts that the alienation of man from God denotes the radical corruption of the human heart and of human society issuing in desperate conflict and disintegration, will have a different view of law. Within this latter conception we may distinguish two points of view.

[23] Cf. his article in the *Neue Schweizer Rundschau,* Jan., 1934.

Those who hold the first point of view are convinced that there is an impassable gulf between the Holy God and sinful man; they are convinced that true community has been wholly destroyed by the disruptive forces of evil. Consequently in this actual world law can under no aspect whatsoever be interpreted as rooted in God's loving creativity and as constituting an organic expression of social unity or of men's pursuit of common ends. Its source is not in the fact of fellowship but in the fact of enmity. Law therefore must be understood exclusively as a restraining barrier between men and social groups which are hostile to one another; it merely checks the worst outbreaks of destructive evil. As such it is indissolubly connected with the dominating force of the state, even though it may not be actually identified with it. As the legal framework of society and the kingdom of divine love are diametrically opposed to each other, from the Christian point of view, the various empirical embodiments of law are, strictly speaking, irrelevant, save on the presupposition that they help to preserve the life of mankind.

The second view holds that both these interpretations unduly simplify the issue, since each turns one aspect of a peculiar paradox into an absolute. The conviction that men's efforts to establish law and order in this empiric world more or less directly reflect the eternal law of the universe is too optimistic in view of the devastating effects of evil in human society. The opposite conviction, namely, that the fallen world lives in radical separation from God, overlooks the fact that the sacred fire of the Creator still burns within the reign of law — however frail and sinful men's efforts to establish and maintain it — and gives to law a numinous majesty to which men bow instinctively.

This duality means that law shares in the logically insoluble contradiction of human existence as a whole. It

must therefore be seen from a twofold point of view. The capacity and the obligation to live and work in a community of mutual service, which the Creator gives to man, is made visible in the order of law. But man constantly distorts the divine purpose. He destroys community with God and with his neighbor, oversteps the boundaries of his creaturely nature, and usurps functions and privileges which belong to others. Here law is absolutely necessary as a barrier, as something which keeps man in his own place. In order to do this effectively law needs the sanctions of coercive power. Insofar as law is based upon man's denial of community, on his lust for egotistical self-assertion, the coercive function of law becomes operative and forces man to an at least external fulfillment of duties which he refuses to perform voluntarily. Law is therefore a servant of freedom and at the same time a check on caprice. It expresses both man's dignity as a being created for personal fellowship, and his degradation when he greedily seeks his own good.

If this paradox rightly indicates the meaning of law for human life, and its place in the divine economy, it has an important bearing on the political ethic. The guiding principles for Christian conduct cannot be identified with man's own claims for unfettered self-development or with the claims of the community; nor are they to be found in an indestructible moral order. On the other hand, it would be incorrect to declare that Christian love has not an intrinsic connection with the sphere of law, and therefore that Christianity has nothing positive or constructive to say to the burning questions of justice or injustice in human life. The personal will of God, incarnated in Jesus Christ and living and acting in a community of redeemed sinners, is the ultimate criterion and the secret motive power in man's unceasing struggle for higher justice.

" Love is the fulfilling of the law " — law, that is, regarded not only in its religious and moral, but also in its juristic sense.

This admittedly rather crude analysis of some basic types of the " theology of law " has already anticipated the views held by the group of Reformed thinkers with whom we are here particularly concerned. Broadly speaking, they may be said to follow the third line of thought which has just been described. The following extract from Brunner is illuminating:

> Law, as the delimitation of my rights, does not belong to the original order of creation, but love does, which certainly includes that which justice requires, but goes still further. . . . Sin, however, alters this perspective. Under the dominion of love there is no need to delimit the spheres of law in a rational manner. For everyone guarantees the rights of the other person. Where, however, sin has intruded, every sphere of life, even the smallest, is menaced. This state of menace produces the following defensive institutions: first of all, " the law " as the sum total of the parity regulations of the spheres of freedom, and second, the state as the protector of the law.[24]

The compulsive authority of the state is at the service of the legal administration. Hence this power — in spite of the fact that it is very questionable from the ethical point of view — receives both a conditional right and a definite limitation. Law for its part points to something higher, to a higher obligation: the norm of justice. Law is always a compromise between the actual situation — with all its inadequacies and interests — and the claims of justice. Where individuals and social groups exceed their rights and desire to enforce their own claims themselves, law must step in and erect a barrier which establishes a certain ex-

[24] Cf. his article in *Totaler Staat und christliche Freiheit.*

ternal balance — an "emergency dike" (Max Huber) which at least for the moment stems the tide of hatred and injustice and prevents it from rolling in and overwhelming the social life of mankind. But it is not only the function of law which is closely connected with evil; its own nature shows very clearly the fallen state of mankind. The fact that legislation and the administration of justice never tally with the supreme demands of justice is due not only to the fallibility or the lack of vision and frailty of its supports. Law is not only frequently obliged to make use of force as an auxiliary, in order to be able to maintain its universal validity against those who resist; all too often it is itself merely stabilized injustice and force.

It is characteristic of this whole interpretation of law — and at this point it is evidently very different from the Roman Catholic view — that it assigns a merely subordinate and limited role to the principle of justice. Even if, for the sake of argument, we could imagine a state of affairs in which the legal organization of a society were to represent a complete incarnation of the spirit of justice, this would still not remove but would indeed intensify the spirit of self-assertion which also emerges in the demand for a just delimitation of the various spheres of human activity. Behind this conception, which we have here stated in a rather pointed way, lies the conviction that justice and love cannot be understood in terms of harmonious cooperation or interpenetration. "Love is not something higher as compared with evil or caprice, but it is something which differs from an order which, in itself, is perfect, and ought to be given its full value." [25]

"Love means going out to others, justice means the delimitation of spheres of power and the protection of these

[25] Huber, *Staatenpolitik und Evangelium*, p. 19.

boundaries. Love is concrete and personal, nondeliberate, nongeneral. Justice, on the other hand, is general, deliberate, impersonal and objective, abstract and rational," [26] says Brunner, but he adds immediately: " This lawful justice is the presupposition of love. Love which has not passed through this stage would be arbitrary and subjective and sentimental; yet love, while passing through this stage, must rise above it. But even in this subordinate position the idea of justice, precisely insofar as it is an element of law, is of incalculable significance for the historical life." [27] For " justice is both the surrogate and the protector of the order of love which has been destroyed by sin." [28] Love and justice are dialectically opposed to each other. But love is closer to justice than it is to injustice. Love is genuinely Christian only where it breaks through and transcends all the considerations of justice, but where it at the same time champions the realization of all that which justice desires, namely, the possibility of a personal life in fellowship and responsibility, as willed by the Creator.

One final quotation will sum up this Reformed view of the state and its functions in society better than many longer descriptions:

> The state is that order, appointed by God, which demonstrates to us most clearly that, in spite of all idealistic glamor, as the New Testament says, we are living in a wicked world. Therefore to live as a Christian in the state means above all to hope for the new world which lies beyond history — beyond history which always was and will be the history of states — for that world where death and killing, force, coercion, and even law will cease, where the only " power " which will then be valid is the power of love. It is the *meditatio vitae futurae* which makes it possible for the Christian to do his difficult

[26] Brunner, *The Divine Imperative,* p. 450.
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] Brunner, in *Totaler Staat und christliche Freiheit.*

duty in this political world without becoming hard; and it is this which prevents him from lapsing into irresponsibility out of the fear of becoming hard. Both his joyful readiness for service and his sanity in service spring from this hope. And these two words sum up the whole political ethic of the Christian.[29]

[29] Brunner, *The Divine Imperative,* pp. 481–82.

X

THE FUNCTIONS AND THE LIMITS OF THE STATE

MODERN MAN lives not only in an expanding universe but also in an expanding state. The contemporary state has totalitarian tendencies. On all hands, with varying emphasis, this fact is being proclaimed in the modern world. In point of fact mankind is becoming increasingly conscious that it is involved in a process in which the political order occupies a far larger and far more prominent place than formerly in the life of society as a whole. This process has certain peculiar and disquieting features which make it urgent for Christians in particular to try to examine this statement and to form some opinion of the reality which lies behind it. Even if it cannot be asserted that there is any consensus at the present time about the meaning and the causes of this expansion of the state, yet its general features are so well known that it would be presumptuous to enter into them here in any detail. Only a few observations will be made in order to give background to the following discussion on the functions and the limits of the state.

Planning and centralization are two dominating tendencies in the social life of the present day. This is not the place to discuss the merits or the demerits of this phenomenon. It may be that in an era of mass production and universal transition, characteristic of the period in which we are living — an era in which processes of disintegration and of reconstruction need to be guided in a certain direction

— an increased measure of planning and a greater measure of state control are inevitable. Within the sphere of social legislation, indeed, it is true that the cooperation of the state has made it possible to introduce certain measures which would otherwise have been impossible. However we may interpret this extension of the sphere of competence of the state, the fact remains that increasingly the modern state is bringing larger sections of the common life under its control. The expansion of its authority is also made possible by the fact that it assumes or takes over functions which were previously exercised by other social agencies.

This tendency is doubtless based, at least in part, upon the fact that with increasing social differentiation, and in many places also increasing social disintegration, the state has been compelled to take action in order to supply the need for unification and control. Were this all, the increase in the power of the state might be regarded as an emergency situation which, once the body corporate regains its health, would automatically disappear. But it is constantly becoming more evident that this transformation of the political order has other causes also. This great extension of state control accompanies, and is at least in part the result of, a qualitative change in the nature of the state itself and in man's understanding of its purpose. A state which behaves as though it were potentially omnicompetent usurps in practice, even if not in theory, the divine attribute of omnipotence. Whether the state claims to be an earthly absolute, or whether as an executive agent it shares in the glory of a particular class or culture or race, its expansion is no longer due simply to social and national necessities, but it becomes a divine imperative which desires to claim man and society exclusively for itself. The expanding state tends to develop symptoms of totalitarian-

ism. It becomes aggressive and ambitious. In fresh outbursts of tyranny, caprice and brutality, of a widespread depreciation of human life — phenomena which are increasing to a terrible extent — demoniac features of the state are emerging which constitute a grave menace both to Christians and to mankind as a whole.

These totalitarian tendencies have been well described in the following passage by J. H. Oldham:

> The totalitarian state is a state which lays claim to man in the totality of his being; which refuses to recognize the independence in their own sphere of religion, culture, education and the family; which seeks to impose on all its citizens a particular philosophy of life; and which sets out to create by means of all the agencies of public information and education a particular type of man in accordance with its own understanding of the meaning and end of man's existence. A state which advances such claims declares itself to be not only a state but also a church.[1]

It would probably be true to say that, strictly speaking, these words describe a claim which is made in various quarters, or the possible goal of an important tendency in modern life, rather than a stage of social history which is actually in existence. Other tendencies which lead in the opposite direction also exist; but in an extremely stimulating passage Christopher Dawson has drawn attention to the fact that this totalitarian tendency is operative not only in countries like those which are most frequently mentioned in this connection, but that it also exists in countries with strong liberal and democratic traditions. His prophecy that a totalitarian state in England would probably be humanitarian, democratic and pacifist is indeed thought-provoking.[2] This fact — that totalitarianism can also

[1] *Church, Community and State,* pp. 9–10.
[2] Cf. his book, *Religion and the Modern State.*

flourish in countries over which the banner of freedom waves — is a warning against the assumption that the great expansion of state control and of totalitarian tendencies is causally connected with the war and its aftermath. Doubtless for the warring nations the war did bring about a great attempt to regulate all spheres of life along totalitarian lines, to mobilize the community as a whole, and it is highly probable that in future wars this will happen to a still greater extent. But even when we have fully recognized the significance of the war for the growth of the omnicompetent state, it is still clear, for everyone who is accustomed to look at events from a historical point of view, that the war should only be regarded as a process which accelerated a development whose sources lie far back in the past. Christopher Dawson's profound observation, which refers to a possible future, also applies to reflection on the past. The liberal state of the last century had practically begun to take over or to control many social functions which, according to its own ideology, would have developed best apart from state control.

We may therefore rightly assert that the increasing expansion of state control and state direction which we are experiencing today is the ripe fruit of a development which has been growing for at least a hundred years. Berdyaev and many other thinkers maintain that the roots of the present general and political situation lie much further back. In their view the Renaissance and the Enlightenment were the spiritual cradle of the self-sufficient and absolute type of humanity which, through the irony of history, has gradually become the slave of the political projection of its own apostasy, the absolute and totalitarian state.

The perception of the fact that totalitarianism is a new name for a phenomenon which has actually existed for a considerable time, though it has added certain new fea-

tures, means that it is possible to interpret our present situation from a broader point of view; in so doing we are able to understand it better and to estimate its gravity. A political situation which is the fruit of a long development, and is closely interwoven with similar developments in other spheres of life, cannot be changed in the twinkling of an eye by merely superficial measures. It can be changed only by a complete rebirth. Of course this fact does not eliminate Christian responsibility for the effort to throw light upon and remove the hidden economic and social causes of this situation. At the present time, however, our supreme need is to show as clearly as possible the *religious* meaning of this burning question of the functions and limits of the state.

Today, therefore, this question has been greatly intensified. The struggle to delimit the sphere of the state — above all in everything which affects religion — has been continually fought out, and the achievement of political freedom in the modern world is indeed a by-product of this struggle for religious freedom. It must, however, be admitted that at the present time the Christian conscience is not greatly concerned with the question of the limits of political authority and its relation to the question of human freedom; still less is it possible to speak of a common Christian mind in this connection. This seems all the more regrettable when we consider what the question of the right limits of state control and of the state's exercise of authority means in terms of human welfare and human suffering. The extension of the power of the state even in those countries where we cannot speak of totalitarian tendencies in the usual sense of the word but where to a large extent the social and the cultural life of the country seems to be coming under political control — this question ought to force itself upon the attention of every Christian in his

personal experience of life. For not only in the exercise of political and legal functions of every kind, but even in the effort to fulfill the daily obligations of the common life, the Christian — whether he is conscious of it or not — has to express his conviction about the state in his continual contact with other political motives and ideals. Would it be exaggerated to maintain that in spite of the traditional acknowledgment of the divine sanction of the state our attitude in political matters finds its source of inspiration rather in Aristotle or Machiavelli, in Hegel or Rousseau, or in all of them together, than in Jesus Christ?

Every conception of the sanction of the state and of its purpose in human society implies that all the questions which refer to its functions and limits are always interpreted from a quite definite point of view. This is true also of the Christian understanding of the state. The previous chapters of this book have shown us that the Christian faith contains political implications which are of the highest significance. At the same time it will have become clear to us in a disquieting and even terrifying way that the Christian understanding of the state is terribly divided. Even in the discussion of the complex questions of the functions and the limits of the state the same divergences and the same common elements play their part. To try to describe these various attitudes in any detail with the aid of modern literature would lead us too far afield. We must be content therefore simply to indicate a few issues which appear to be of crucial importance in this particular field of the political ethic. Possibly the only merit of the following observations may lie in the fact that these issues do not represent the arbitrary choice of an individual, but that, to a great extent, within ecumenical Christendom they have shown themselves to be points at which Christian thought and endeavor in this field have been crystallized.

The subject of this chapter, generally speaking, covers four sets of problems. Does the Christian understanding of life in general, and of the state in particular, imply a distinctive view of the character and range of the functions of the state in society? What standards and criteria does it contain for the Christian attitude within these various spheres of influence? What does it say about the limits of the state? And, finally (this is really the same thing, only it is looked at from the opposite point of view), what message has it to proclaim about the problem of freedom in the political sphere? Since these issues are really only different aspects of one and the same subject we shall not make a rigid distinction among them in the following paragraphs.

It is obvious that there is no authoritative Christian opinion on these very complicated questions. We might argue, indeed, on theological and on practical grounds, that from the Christian point of view it does not really matter at what point the state (according to its conception of the needs of the actual situation) actually defines its limits, presupposing of course that it fulfills its own distinctive purpose and by its powerful authority maintains peace and order within the community. From the Christian point of view, we might argue, the important thing is not that there should be a formal delimitation of the spheres controlled by the different corporate bodies within the community, but the general direction of state policy, the question whether it is hostile to the church of Christ, or tolerant, or friendly. It could be urged that from the Christian view the general ideological and ethical attitude of the state is the crucial point, and not any attempt to restrict state control in such a way that it leaves all the room possible for human independence, both individual and social.

The important element of truth in this argument must not be overlooked. At the same time we might rightly reply in the following terms: It is precisely because the divergence, and indeed in many places the open conflict, between a state policy — increasingly influenced by secular and neo-pagan ideologies — and the Christian way of life has come out so plainly that the question of the limits of the state in reference to the church, as well as to human life as a whole, has become acute. The further the policy of a state departs from its God-given task in society, the more necessary it is that the church try to understand more fully the limits of a state's authority; once it is clear upon this matter, it is then its duty to point it out clearly to those who guide the ship of state.

What, then, are the functions of the state from the Christian point of view? This question itself presupposes that the state *is* limited, both in its aim and in its functions; that is, that it cannot be equated with the community as a whole, but that it has to fulfill certain definite functions of its own within the community. "God wills the diversity of institutions and associations," says Luther and, as the preceding chapters in this book have constantly shown us, in this statement Luther is expressing a universal Christian conviction. A totalitarian society is incompatible with the Christian view of life. Within this general statement, however, there are various different Christian interpretations of human society, and accordingly of the relation of the state to other social forms. The Catholic doctrine of society, for instance, with its emphasis upon the organism, gives the state a certain position within an established hierarchy of social ends and functions.

To the majority of Protestants this conception is unacceptable. They feel that this whole conception of the world and of society as a harmonious organism hierarchically or-

ganized represents a theory which is remote from reality, since it does not allow for the actual operation of evil within the world and is also opposed to findings of sociology. But in spite of these differences, as well as many others, in all Christian traditions it would be agreed that the family, culture, etc., do not exist merely at the good pleasure of the state. The following quotation is very apt:

> Human beings do not enter into the relations between the sexes, into the community of labor or of culture, owing to the compulsion of the state, but because they feel a natural desire and need to do so. This desire has been created by God, although it has been sinfully distorted by man. The functions of marriage, of the family, of economics and technique, of culture and education are not primarily concerned with the purpose of the state at all save in the fact that the state creates the framework for these institutions. Since, however, all these functions are menaced by evil, the state intervenes in order to compensate for the disintegration in fallen human nature. But so far as all these orders are concerned its function is clearly a subsidiary one. It uses compulsion to maintain order wherever it may be required, as for instance, in the compulsory protection of marriage, compulsory education, compulsory economic organization, compulsory support of the functions of culture (art, science, etc.). But in all this the state is merely making it possible for these various institutions to function; it is never a creator. Therefore these functions never belong to the state; the state merely protects them and keeps them in order.[3]

Catholic social philosophy speaks in similar terms of associations — economic, cultural, religious, etc. — which have issued organically from the social nature of man and must be regarded as possessing ontological priority over the state. But in this form this assertion of the purely subsidiary character of the state in society is not the only one in the field. In contemporary Lutheranism in particular there is another conception which regards the state

[3] Brunner, in *Totaler Staat und christliche Freiheit.*

not only as an indispensable organization of the community, but as one which, alongside the church, is supreme over all other social units.

It is obvious that all these different views of society must also very largely determine the prevailing conceptions of the functions and limits of the state.

The Christian view of the state makes a far-reaching distinction between its primary and its secondary functions. Speaking generally, we might say that in spite of all the religious differences which lie behind the Christian view there is still a large measure of agreement about these so-called primary functions, but that there is great difference of opinion about the secondary functions.

Throughout the course of history, as well as at the present day, Christendom has always held that the primary and distinctive task of the state consists in the establishment and preservation of order within society. It is true, of course, that when this fundamental statement is expounded interpretations vary. The more, for instance, the operation of sinister and destructive forces in the community is emphasized, the greater will be the emphasis laid upon this primitive function of the state. The negative task of prevention of anarchy and chaos is more necessary for the existence of the community than the positive task of the establishment of justice. Hence the strong emphasis on the necessity for real sovereignty as well as on the authoritarian character of the state in much of continental Protestant thought about the state. At the same time, however, it is evident that there is a growing moral sensitiveness about the use of force as a method for the maintenance of social order, a sensitiveness which is expressed in opposition to the use of force in the terrible forms of modern war.

Another common element in the Christian view of the state is the fact that the social order which the state is com-

missioned to establish is generally described in detail as peace and justice.

Traditional Protestant thought upon these questions, especially on the continent of Europe, has been mainly concerned with the effort to secure comparative stability and cooperation within the internal political sphere, while in the international sphere it has understood "peace" in a rather negative sense as the exercise of power to secure the community against attack, rather than in the positive sense of the actual establishment of peace. To the honor of the Roman Church, be it said that it has always emphasized the universal international character of the state as a peacemaker. So far as Protestant Christendom is concerned, it can scarcely be contested that it has not felt sufficient moral concern for questions of international policy and the possibilities of establishing an international order.

In the present world situation with its strongly centralized states — a situation in which international anarchy is a far greater and more terrible menace than internal chaos — an extension and deepening of the traditional political ethos at this point is urgently necessary. Even if the present tendencies toward extreme nationalism scarcely seem favorable to such an undertaking, we may still thankfully recognize that, particularly on the part of the ecumenical movement, this question is being investigated in a responsible manner and that promising movements are on foot.

The theological argument which regards the state mainly as a protection against social chaos and the fear of anarchy has been a large factor in the tendency to interpret the ordering function of the state in terms of the social and economic status quo, and this in spite of the plain teaching of the Bible that justice is the will of God for all spheres of life. But there is no agreement in Christian thought about the meaning of justice as the standard and aim of political

action; hence at the present time thinkers of all kinds are wrestling earnestly with these questions.[4]

Thus, so far as the primary function of the state is concerned, ecumenical Christendom is confronted by three great ethical problems which call for much clear thinking and courageous action: the right use of force in Christian action; the struggle for international peace; and the promotion of social justice.

Many Christians regard this work for order, peace and justice as the fundamental function of the state; others, indeed, would even regard it as the only one. The relation of the state to the various social forms does not consist in influencing them or in trying to create such forms, but in protecting and assisting them by means of its legal system. The modern state, however, takes very little notice of the considerations and concerns of the Christian ethos. The totalitarian state guides the whole community according to its own will and extends its control over culture, the national ethos and the general philosophy of life. The problems which this situation produces for the church have not yet been thought out from the Christian standpoint. Indeed, in all their seriousness and difficulty they have scarcely been realized or perceived by Christians generally. To try to discuss these difficult problems in greater detail would lead us too far afield. We would merely suggest the following question: May it be that the great conflict between the church and the modern secularized or neo-pagan state will be fought out in this sphere of the secondary functions of the state, and within the sphere of education in particular?

Thus we have again come back to the question of the

[4] For instance, the great social encyclicals of the recent popes, the social creed of the Federal Council of the Churches in America, and the message of the Stockholm Conference all testify eloquently to this fact.

limits of the state. Primarily, the first thing we have to say is that the limits of the state are already defined by its sanction and its task. However the functions of the state may be conceived in greater detail by the different Christian traditions, it is clear that the idea of a divine sanction of the state does suggest a final criterion by which all judgments on concrete situations and conditions should be tested. This process of wrestling with the problem of the limits of the state, however, especially from the Christian point of view, is so burdened with political and ideological considerations and interests that it is equally important, and indeed absolutely necessary, to consider the problem from a more comprehensive point of view. To do so is necessary because the other social spheres (the family, economics, etc.) must be taken into account; we must try to discover their distinctive and God-given functions within society and what this means for their relations with the state. In other words, we are here concerned with the ancient problem, theoretically insoluble, of the relation between authority and freedom.

Here the Christian conception is fighting on two fronts, against both the individualistic and the collectivistic view of freedom. There is no doubt that the Christian view has been frequently distorted by such misinterpretations. Again and again this difficult problem is regarded as an antithesis; that is, the authority of the state and human freedom are regarded as opposed to each other. This view gives rise to the ethical demand that the state guarantee as far as possible the independence of the community in order that the community may develop freely. On the other hand, the passionate opposition to individualism in all its forms, which actuates wide circles of continental Protestantism at the present time, leads all too easily to the other extreme of the collectivist misinterpretation. So much

weight is laid on the importance of the community as compared with the individual that personal freedom is relegated to the background.

The central problem with which we are wrestling and must continue to wrestle in ecumenical Christendom is a twofold one: What freedom and independence must the church demand for the development of its own life in order that it may rightly fulfill its God-given task? Further, what standards does the Christian understanding of life set up to guide our attitude toward the different problems of the relation of the authority of the state to the individual life of the various social institutions (such as education, culture, economic systems, etc.), and in what does the concrete responsibility of the church and of Christians consist in this sphere? The great problem with which we are here concerned may be defined as follows: In ever new decisions we have to discover where to draw the line between the freedom which man needs for the fulfillment of his divinely given destiny, and that unrestricted caprice which springs from evil and threatens human social life with chaos. We must find the way which lies between the destruction of political authority as a whole and the enforced control of all the social institutions by the state. At this point, that is, where we are concerned with the limits of the state — however remote at times this concern may seem to be from the central questions of faith — what we believe about the state and about life as a whole will emerge quite clearly. In the most practical questions of the functions of the state and its limits, as compared with other social functions, it must inevitably become plain whether Christians in all their action believe that the state is not merely a human and utilitarian but a divine institution.

The effort to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of the state, an effort which is engaging the attention of

so many Christian thinkers at the present time, shows very plainly that the church is both bewildered and divided. At the very moment when political problems are peculiarly urgent and insistent, it is painful and humiliating that this should be the case. Even in their attitude toward the state today there are wide differences of opinion among Christians. This diversity, however, means that it is all the more necessary not to reject the honest convictions of any Christian brethren, but to make an effort to understand the particular Christian witness which lies behind their views, strange as they may seem to us.

But although we frankly acknowledge the variety and uncertainty which characterize the Christian attitude toward politics, we must also thankfully admit that among those Christians who are wrestling with these problems certain common convictions do emerge — convictions which are really very simple and self-evident, yet if they were actually lived out as vital realities in national and international life they would effect a complete revolution in national and international politics.

The central element in these convictions might perhaps be formulated thus: First of all, concern for the state is a vital part of the work of the church. Political action is not a matter of indifference to the Christian faith. The reality of our fellowship with God ought to be proved within the life of the state. The message of God's saving will in Christ is not addressed to isolated souls living in some timeless sphere, but to mankind as a whole, and this whole includes the political aspect of human activity.

Second, the concern of the church for the state is essentially, or at least primarily, with its "soul," that is, with its religious and ethical significance, its function within the divine economy, as revealed in the light of Christ. At the present time in particular, when the state is once more be-

ing elevated to the level of an absolute and conflicting interests, forces and parties are trying to win the churches and individual Christians to support their selfish political purposes, it is more important than ever to emphasize the truth that even in the sphere of politics Christianity is concerned first and foremost with obedience or disobedience to God. For Christian life and thought on political matters the essential criterion is not the utilization of the state for the furtherance of class interests, nor for the rigid organization and, if possible, development of the national community, nor for the self-centered expansion of the authority of the ruling caste, nor for the victory of any particular ideology. The concern of the church for the good of the state — expressed in intercession, loyalty, criticism and willing cooperation — is the result of a deep conviction that the political order has a special function to fulfill within the divine economy. The political ethos insofar as it desires to be genuinely Christian must be the human response to what God gives and demands through the political order.

The problem of the state brings us to the central questions of the Christian faith and the Christian understanding of life. At this point, in view of the grave problems of our own day, Christian unity is imperative. Yet in spite of this fact there are profound divergences and mutual misunderstandings among Christians. Further, the vital necessity to formulate definite opinions about the great questions of national and international politics, coupled with a profound sense of responsibility to God, is producing, as we know to our cost, fresh divisions among Christian people, and even enmity and distrust. Our common worship and common action are constantly being hindered both by the external measures taken by the state and still more by these differences of view among Christian people.

This situation might well drive us to despair were it not for the fact that wherever the way of loyalty to Christ is sought and found, the clouds lift and reveal the promise of dawn. This comes out plainly in the following passage from the pen of one of the Christian prophets of the present day:

> In our own church life and practice are we really listening to the voice of Christ in the attitude we adopt toward the realities and problems of the world in the midst of which the church is set? Is our relation to the state, for instance — is all our church life, thought and practice, really controlled and directed by Christ himself? Or, in this respect as in so many others, are we merely following policies controlled by views which, although perfectly respectable from the conventional point of view, have no connection with Christ? Yet if two or three different and separated churches, each in its own way, were to give themselves — in a spirit of penitence and willingness to repent — wholly to the effort to wrestle with this problem [of the state], in so doing, within these *churches* the one *Church* would automatically come into existence, and would also become a living and visible reality.[5]

[5] Karl Barth, *Die Kirche und die Kirchen,* pp. 21–22 (Munich, 1935).

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